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T R A C T S

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AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION.

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... American Unitarian Association.

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ANNIVERSARY ADDRESS

BEFORE THE

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION.

By ORVILLE DEWEY, D. D.

PRINTED FOR THE
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BOSTON:
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JULY, 1848.

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A D D R E S S.

MY BRETHREN AND FRIENDS,—

We are met to consult together, to take counsel with one another, upon the interests of that department of the Christian Church in which we stand. We are here to consider and discuss matters,—matters of doctrine, sentiment, practice, or Christian enterprise,—that belong to us as holding a certain and distinct position in the religious world. I say this special department, this distinct position; not for the purpose of drawing any unnecessarily broad line of division between us and other Christians. In spirit we are no more distinct from the Christian body than Episcopalians, Presbyterians, or Methodists are; perhaps not so much; certainly our toleration, our willingness to recognize all sincere claims to the Christian name, goes farther than that of many of our brethren. Still, we hold to distinct ground. Whether we choose to call ourselves a sect or not, whether we are a denomination or not, we do undoubtedly occupy a marked position in the Christian world. We have clear and definite views of our own, that separate us from most other Christian bodies. If we were to say that we are not a denomination, that would only make us so much more a denomination; for it would mark and distinguish us more than any thing else. In short, our existence is a fact; and facts must have names.

Bodies of men do not give themselves names, any more than the tribes of animals did, that passed before Adam. Others affix labels upon the things that they would know ; things do not label themselves. And sometimes men write the name, as apothecaries do " poison," upon what is dangerous. A name is flung at dissent, is meant to be a clog about its steps ; and so it *is*, perhaps, for a while ; but by and by it creeps up and up, till it answers as a useful girdle or garment,—and higher still, till it becomes a crown of honor.

I am speaking thus definitely, my brethren, because I propose to say some things about this same liberal, or catholic, or Unitarian body of Christians, to which we belong. It is to me not a very agreeable subject,—*ourselves*. We have had too much of it of late, I must think. It appears to me, that, of late years, we have arrived, as a denomination, at an extraordinary degree of self-consciousness ; and it does not seem to me the most healthful condition. Time was, when we did our work as well as we could, when we fought our battle as we were obliged to do ; when we busied ourselves, not with thinking of ourselves, but with what we had to do. We had come honestly to entertain certain views of Christianity ; we found them earnestly assailed ; we thought it our duty to defend them. We took our origin in that protest ; we were Protestants of the Protestants. We *did* believe, too, that religion was grievously abused and wronged by certain errors which had attached themselves to it ; that its entrance into the human heart was hindered by those misapprehensions ; that its general power and prevalence were hindered, and its grandeur and beauty obscured, by those mistakes ; and we set ourselves, as the great labor of our lives, to expose them, and to give what we thought a juster exposition of Christianity. We wrote books and

tracts, pamphlets and sermons, and we published them. And the result is a body of religious writings, which, I believe, has produced, is producing, and will produce, some effect in the world. I speak, brethren, of the times of Kirkland, and Channing, and the Wares, and Whitman, and Greenwood; and of others, who with them rest from their labors.

Well, their conflict is over; the combatants sleep in honored dust; for ever hallowed be their memories! And now,—what are we doing now? Why, we are very busy with the question whether we are doing any thing; whether we are not going backward; whether we have in any degree fulfilled our mission as a denomination, or have any business to be at all. A remarkable spirit of self-criticism has sprung up among us. Some are questioning whether we have arrived at any just results in our philanthropy and piety, as a denomination; others, whether we are consistent with our professions as religious believers; and others still, whether we have any coherence,—whether we are not likely soon to fall all to pieces. And it is said that the religious bodies around us, seeing all this, are speculating about their share in the wreck, when it can no longer hold together, or the chance that some one of them may have it all. It is certain that no religious denomination before was ever so fearless and reckless about what their adversaries might think of them. We have no policy,—that is certain. I do not say that I regret it. We must take what comes. If there is singular liberty among us, if there is a good deal of intelligence as well as freedom to think, if our denomination is nearly resolved into a collection of thinking individualities, amenable neither to consistory nor church, to prelate nor pastor, it will not be strange if many wild and reckless things are said among ourselves about Unitarianism;

either as strong and triumphant, or as weak or failing ; or if others should say, without any conscious want of modesty, " Cease it assuredly will."

But I do question, however, whether this state of self-criticism is a good condition for ourselves. The moment the *entire body* of any denomination distrusts its mission, that moment it ceases to have any mission. A pervading self-criticism has always marked the decadence of literature and art, and I believe it will equally signalize the decadence of religion. And if we *are* cold and inactive and inefficient as a Christian body, I believe it may be owing to this cause as much as to any other. At the same time, I do not deny that a just self-criticism has its uses. A reasonable self-inspection, self-questioning, self-distrust, is good. At any rate, it exists, to some remarkable degree ; and though it does not pervade our ranks, it prevails among us to an unusual extent, and it is a reason why I shall venture to offer some remarks upon our position, prospects, and duties as a religious body.

This, then, I hold to be our position. In common with all other Christians, we believe,—pardon this brief statement of what you well know, for it is important to my purpose,—in common, I say, with all Christians, we believe in God, in Christ, in the Bible, and in the doctrines and duties which we understand the Bible to teach. In distinction from the creeds of most Christian bodies, we believe that God exists as one self-conscious being, and not as three self-conscious beings, agents, or persons ; we believe that Christ is, in a peculiar sense, the Son of God, but not God himself ; we believe that Christ suffered and died for us to bring us nigh to God, but not to remove some legal and otherwise insuperable obstacle to the Divine forgiveness ; we believe in the soul's regeneration, but not in its passive or instanta-

neous regeneration ; we believe in retribution, but not in the literal eternity of the punishment threatened in Scripture. This is our position. Is it not definite and clear enough ? Is there any thing doubtful, any thing equivocal, about it ? Have our adversaries been fighting, during a thirty years' war, against shapeless shadows, against no opinions, against nothing ? Plainly enough, they have not thought so.

And now, brethren, I ask, Is there any wavering among us upon these points ? Are there any signs among us of disbanding and breaking up ? If there be, I cannot see them. We may have faults enough ; but I do not see indecision and disunion to be among them. We have doubtless much to learn and far to advance, and upon this I shall venture to insist ; but I see no need of a firmer or more fixed attachment to our faith. It may be a small enough virtue, but I do not believe there has ever been, since the Apostles' time, a community of churches more thoroughly grounded in their convictions than we are. And then as to union among ourselves, while no body of believers on earth is freer, I think there is no body on earth more united. We are united, not under any earthly head claiming authority over us. We are united, not by consistory or articles, not by bonds of paper or parchment, but by sentiment and affection. This Association is not our bond, but only the symbol of it. Our position is that of *a school of opinion and sentiment*, rather than that of an organized force. Our bond, may I reverently say, is to Christ, and to the love of God in Christ. And the bond is strong ; we feel it to be strong. Why, the bond is such that we have no fear of its breaking, and can say that we are no sect, unless it be "the great Anti-sectarian Sect" ; and some of us can say that we are not a denomination ; and nobody is troubled by it. Still, we feel that we belong to one another, and we are

"persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth," nor any thing else, "shall be able to separate us."

We stand united, then. But it may be suggested that our stand is of that very questionable sort which is called a "stand still." It is alleged, I believe, that our numbers do not increase, that our churches do not multiply; that our faith is not spreading. I confess that I am not accustomed to keep any special account of these matters. I might not have thought of the statistics of our faith, if the question had not been raised about them. And I am really indebted to the question for the fuller recognition, in my own mind, of some very extraordinary facts which it has brought me to consider. Four years ago we had but one theological school. Now we have a second,—that at Meadville,—larger than the first. And the first, if it has been subject to some fluctuations of late years and sometimes to a slight decrease of members, has not differed in this respect from many of the old theological schools in the country. The fact is,—and it is a fact worthy of more attention than it has received,—that the young men of the country are less disposed to enter the clerical profession than they were formerly. But to return, and to extend the inquiry to the actual prevalence of our faith in this country,—ten or fifteen years ago, ours was the only Christian body in America that was known as holding to the simple unity of God against the Trinitarian hypothesis. Now there are three such bodies; the Universalist in the main, the Christian, and our own. Forty years ago, there were not three churches in America that were consciously and avowedly Unitarian; now there are nearly three thousand. Then there were not probably a thousand persons in all the United States that

were conscious of holding our opinions; now there are nearly a million. There are, that is to say, including with the Churches before named a large body of the Society of Friends, nearly or quite a million. And beyond this, it is well known that our influence has gone far and wide, over broad regions of opinion, and has modified more or less the whole theology of the country. If this is called standing still, I should like to hear a definition of progress. We talk about slow progress, and even about decline, and we suffer others to talk in this way almost uncontradicted, for we are not careful for *statistics*; but I doubt whether the world can show such a rapid progress of unaided religious opinion as this.

"Ah! but," it is said, "there are sad and alarming defections in this very body, and especially in its oldest churches, from their earlier faith." The charge has been made, and has been received in certain quarters with ominous shakings of the head, that we are not true and sincere in our acceptance of Christianity and the Christian records; that our actual belief does not agree with our professed belief; that while we profess to rest on the Bible as our creed and our foundation, we do *not* rest on it; that one fragment of it is giving way under the blow of one critic, and another fragment is yielding to the prying inquisition of another, and that the whole basis is fast sinking beneath us; in fact, that it is virtually gone already, one admitted mistake vitiating the whole record. Is this true, my brethren? I say, dispassionately, Is this true? Because it *may* be, undoubtedly, that men, and honest men, may swerve considerably from their faith almost without knowing it; that they may adopt new views, and still keep the old phraseology. All changes of opinion, I suppose, have witnessed that fact. Why, the very deniers of Christ's miracles and superhuman authority

still profess to believe in Christ, and to receive his mission and his inspiration, in some sense. Is it, then, for them, and, I say more generally, is it for any body, to reject our claim to be honest believers in the Bible? Are we to be charged with concealment, evasion, or inconsistency?

What is the ground which we occupy on this subject? We believe, the body of us, in the supernatural mission of Moses and of the Christ. We believe that God spake by Moses, and that in these latter days he hath spoken by his Son from heaven, in a sense essentially different from that in which he spake through the wisdom of Socrates or Cicero. We believe that miracles were wrought to sustain both the Hebrew and Christian dispensations. And we receive the Scriptures as the record of our religion, as the expression of our faith, as having authority above all human creeds. We say the Bible is our creed, rather than the Augsburg Confession or the Westminster Catechism; and we freely submit the articles of our faith to that standard. Whatever individuals connected with us may do, this is our ground as a Christian body. All this is undoubtedly true. But we do not say, and never did say, that every word in the Bible is the unerring word of God. We do not say, and never did say, that every passage or every book in the Scriptures is put beyond all question. We believe that the Scriptures are a human testimony to certain Divine communications and interpositions, — a testimony true in the main, and so to be received, but liable to some mistake in the details, and to be subjected to a careful criticism. Does this qualification vitiate and annul our claim to receive the Bible as our creed, our religion, and our law? Luther contemptuously called the Epistle of James "an epistle of straw." Le Clerc indignantly rejected the idea, that the imprecations of David against his enemies were Divinely inspired. Erasmus says,

that "Christ suffered his disciples to err, even after the Holy Ghost was sent down, but not to the endangering of the faith." Has their faith in the Bible ever been discredited thereby? The learned Michaelis, and after him Bishop Marsh, his translator, distinguish between the Divine sense of the Scriptures and the human communication of it; and Paley and Butler, between the doctrines of the sacred writers and their arguments and illustrations,— maintaining that the former were to be received, and that the latter might be questioned. Have Marsh and Paley and Butler lost their place in the Church as Christian believers, believers in the Bible, orthodox believers? It would be easy to extend the list very far of learned men who have made similar distinctions, and whose faith in the Bible has never been impeached nor questioned. I say, then, that, in common with the body of Christians, we stand upon the Bible basis; and that we stand upon it in clearer singleness of heart and faith than many of them do. It is *not* true that our actual belief differs from our professed belief. We profess to be Bible Christians, rather than Calvinistic Christians or Arminian Christians or Swedenborgian Christians, and we are so. It is remarkable that we have not, and never had, any recognized human leader. We derive our faith from Christ, rather than from any of his ministers, however distinguished. We believe in the Bible. We believe that it is the record of interpositions above all human power, of a wisdom above all human wisdom, of a special redeeming work of God's mercy for his earthly creatures.

My friends, it is a great and solemn faith; and it is a serious question for us to consider, What are we *doing* in accordance with such a faith? What, as a Christian body, are we doing? Far, far too little. Every Christian's life should be as a flame upon the altar of sacrifice. Into the

depths of humiliation, doubtless, may every one of us justly sink, in contemplation of his defects and failures. This kind of self-criticism I would not gainsay or question. But let us not do ourselves injustice, and especially as a Christian denomination. The individual self-reproach may be right, and yet the relative self-reproach may be wrong. It is bad and wrong to say that we are doing nothing, if we are doing something ; that we have achieved nothing, if we have achieved something ; that spiritual life is dying out of us, if it is not dying out. And in my inmost soul I believe and feel that it is not dying out. I verily believe that our denomination was never more alive and energetic and efficient than it is at this moment. There is not, for instance, any one form of public benevolent effort that can be named, in which we are not taking more interest now than we ever did before. I do not say that we are doing enough ; far from it. We entered this field laboring under many prejudices ; we thought it was full of mistakes, especially in the missionary department, and we think so still,—full, too, of sectarianism, full of enforced charities ; but we have nevertheless entered it, and are doing more than we have done at any former period. Then, in our congregations, we are increasing our means and enlarging our plans by Sunday schools and Bible-classes, by liturgical aids and social gatherings, for the common edification and improvement. And now shall I surprise you, my clerical or my lay brethren around me, if I say, that the greatest instrument of all, the greatest means at once and sign of spiritual life, the *preaching*, is better in our denomination generally than it ever was before ? There is more life in our pulpit,—I speak generally, of course, and I believe I might generalize the remark so as to embrace most other denominations,—there is more life in the pulpit now than there ever was before. We are *not* growing dead,

and our clergy are not becoming dead, to the highest interests, I had almost said the sole interests, of humanity. Nor is the age sinking into this awful stupor. It is not, in my belief, an age of dearth and death. There is a chord in the universal heart that thrills to the sanctity of the Gospel. That affecting story of the silver image of Christ in the palace of the Tuilleries is significant; as a quaint writer of our time would say, it is significant *of much*. A lawless crowd, the lowest populace of Paris, is rioting in the seats of luxurious monarchy, in the guarded sanctuary of a monarch's home. Without leader or head, wild with excitement, half distracted with curiosity and wonder and success, they rush from apartment to apartment, to gaze, but not, — after the first momentary impulse, — not to despoil. At length the silver image is presented. What do they do? What do they say? They pause; they say, " Reverence this, — this is the Master!" With uncovered heads, they bear it to a neighbouring church, amidst the reverent attention of all the street multitudes, in that stormy hour of disorder and misrule. What was the motto of the Revolution forty years ago? "Crush the wretch!" Now they say, "This is the Master, — reverence him!"

But to return, and to consider again the life that is in our denomination and in our preaching. Doubtless, there is too little of it; but is it decreasing and dying out? Are there signs of decadence and death among us? This is the question. And that there is any such fact or any such sign, this I do resolutely deny. This complaint of a dead church and of a dead preaching — which is not confined to us, I may observe, but is spread far and wide — is to me a sign of wakening energies, of an increased religious culture in the public mind, of a greater demand for earnestness and life. I see, I know, that there is increasing life in the administra-

tion of religion; and therefore my conclusion is, not that the pulpit is dwindling, but that the public mind is enlarging, — is perhaps outgrowing the pulpit. If this be true, let the inference come home to us of the clergy with what power it ought; but let it not be an inference to deaden or discourage us: the very contrary.

And with regard to the question, whether or not we are doing any thing, I could wish it were a little better considered what the true doing is. We seem to refer it all to signal enterprises. A congregation, a minister, is doing something, only when going out of the beaten path. That is the special tendency of thought at the present day; but I question it, and more than question it. First, I say, the true doing of a man is more within his own breast than without him, — there the good work must begin; next, it is more in his private and daily life than in his occasional and public life, more in his ordinary state and condition than in any extraordinary action. Look at the preacher's work. I say, that what falls into the routine of his ordinary and daily tasks is more than any thing he can do out of it. Is he who makes daily visits of Christian kindness and counsel, who daily visits the sick and afflicted, and who writes one or two sermons in a week, and on Sunday preaches them, — is he doing nothing? What is doing, then? What is it, if tasking hand and heart and brain to daily exhaustion is not doing? This writing and preaching of sermons, — if you hear of a man who does only that, you may think he is doing little or nothing, compared with him who visits sick and poor people; but I deny it; I say, there is no more vital doing in the world, to a true man, than the meditation and preaching of sermons. What ministry of relief to the needy, or of freedom to the slave, or of peace to the war-worn nations, hath a sincerer aim to the general welfare, or

a more earnest devotion, than this? My friends, I do not like to say these things; but I do think it desirable that we and our congregations should understand, that there is some *doing* in this world, that does not walk beneath the flaunting banners of public enterprise; that there is earnest and sincere doing in the silent paths of Christian and ministerial duty; yes, and that there are thousands of hearts to testify that it is a doing of God's work of help and mercy in the world.

But enough of this. More we have to do,—more, far more. I have spoken unwillingly of what we have done and are doing, because I think that undue self-criticism, heavy complaint and discouragement, are apt to drag upon the wheels of progress. From doing to more doing, from strength to strength, from victory to victory,—that is the true progress. More is to be done,—so much more, that it leaves what has been done to be, in my thought, but as the infancy, the childhood, at most, of the ministry, the Church, and the world. I look for a time, and I sometimes think it is not far distant, when there shall be an earnestness in the pulpit, an internal activity in the churches, and a going forth beyond them into world-wide paths of Christian philanthropy and reform, such as the world has never seen before among us or any people.

Let me say something, now, of this progress and improvement. Let me say some things that most impress my own mind; though in doing so I may not satisfy the largest thought of all who hear me, or the yet larger demands of the subject itself. What other thoughts and better require to be uttered, you will express in the meetings of this Anniversary Week. This is *my* opportunity, and I will use it as I am able,—modestly, but not timidly. I will say freely what I think, and you will think as freely of what I say.

Let me go, first and at once, to the root of all improvement,—to what, indeed, in its full growth, is the end, but to what, in its living germ, is the beginning,—and that is, to a vital sense of the *reality* of that which we are here considering. Inductions must have data. We cannot proceed without a first step. We would advance; but we must advance from something. We would build; but we must build upon some basis. Down, deep among the roots and foundations of our being, are certain principles,—religion, virtue, duty; bonds of the infinite authority upon us, teachings and laws of God, teachings and laws of conscience. We say that these are realities; but at any rate, there is no half-way about them. They are realities, or they are not. If they are not, then let all churches and ministries, all private and domestic offices of meditation and prayer, and all public religious enterprises,—the missions, the tract and Bible societies, the Sunday schools, the theological seminaries,—let them all go and begone out of a world with which they have nothing to do. But if those principles *are* realities, if truth and right, if the faith in God and in virtue, *are* realities, then—what shall I say? what words can bear up the burden of the inference?—then out of those realities must spring and grow all our welfare, and all the world's welfare,—every highest truth and all holiest sanctity, all nobleness, and all blessedness.

Brethren, we come here to meditate upon and to care for the deepest and most real thing in the world. To our private and instant well-being, to the universal and eternal welfare of men, nothing is so vital. This Anniversary Week is not a mere gala time,—a time of goodly ceremonies and services, a season of spiritual dissipation, of mere curiosity to hear what is said and see what is done; it is a gathering around the central point of all human welfare.

Religion, the Right, — divinest truth and life in us, — this is the grandest element in all human counsels and conveations. Conventions to nominate a president, Chartist demonstrations, monster meetings, movements in Italy or Germany, National Assembly in France, — all are nothing without this ; all must tend to this, — must tend, that is to say, to establish justice, to promote the highest, the moral well-being of men, or they are nothing ; they have no dignity, no grandeur ; nay, they are worse than nothing. The great problem of every human life, that for which it was given, is to work out and to act out this solemn and sublime sense of what is divinely true and right ; in other words, to have the Christ formed in us as the hope of glory and the spring of all blessing and blessedness.

Could we start from this great conviction, all would go well, all would be comparatively easy. Could we drive out the spirit of egotism, self-consciousness, selfishness, from our churches and from our bosoms, not only would the Christian path grow bright and brighter before us, but all our Christian enterprises would thrive and prosper.

First, we should do that highest good that any body of Christians can do, — that which would outweigh a hundred times all the other good in their power to accomplish, — we should demonstrate, what so many doubt, the reality and blessedness of the right and holy life. This noble exemplification our religion wants more than any thing else, — more than it wants funds, establishments, seminaries, churches, preachers, and whatever else is sought for to promote it. The wealth of empires cast at our feet, and millions of adherents walking in our train, and a thousand missions carrying their banners through the world, could not put forth the regenerative power that would reside in one single body of men really bearing the image of Jesus Christ, breath-

ing his spirit, and clothed with the might of his love and pity.

Next, our treasuries would be filled. This, though not the highest concern for us, is yet a point of great importance. All our associations are more or less crippled in their power by the want of means. It is not because we are poor. It is not because we lack the opportunity to give. It is that we want the living sense of that for which we give. A famine of bread calls forth our sympathy, calls us to the rescue. Funds are gathered, noble ships go forth from our wharves, and generous men conduct them, to bear relief. We have no such sense of what is meant by a famine of the bread of life, by a famine in the soul ; but it is the deeper and more terrible want.

Again, all our associations and enterprises would work well under the right spirit. Presiding officers then can be found, and faithful committees, and laborious agents. Societies are nothing, and funds are nothing, without a right management. Somebody must work. There is more to be done than to associate and subscribe and give. Somebody must do it. There *are* doers among us, and I am grateful that we can refer to them. But more such are wanted ; in some quarters, they are sadly wanted ; men that will come out, and act openly and earnestly for the great cause, even as men act for their party in the political concerns of a country. The good spirit, the spirit of God only, will give us true laborers, the laborers that we want.

Let me proceed to speak of some other forms in which, I think, progress and improvement are to appear.

The internal activity of our churches is one form. A church that is not merely a worshipping assembly, not merely preached to and listening and punctually attentive ; a church that is a beneficent institution, a kind of relief

society to the ignorant, erring, and needy around it; a church that, through benevolent action and sometimes friendly gatherings or religious conference, is a common ground for different classes, by which the friendship and culture of some may flow out to others who need them; a church that is a school of religious learning and progress, a kind of Christian institute, having not only its Sunday school, but its Bible-classes and still higher modes of regular instruction, in ecclesiastical history, in the biography of the greatest and best men, in Christian evidences and records; a church, in fine, that is a body of persons, and the only visible body on earth, bound together in a relation humbling to all, exalting to all,—bound to God, and to eternity, and to the hope of heaven,—such a church would I see, and would that all churches were such. And why should there not be *revivals* of attention and concern in these churches, seasons of special thoughtfulness and earnestness, as there are in all other schools? In truth, they are not unnatural, not necessarily fanatical; epochs belong to the healthful order and progress of our minds. What if the pastor of a church should, at the close of the year, speak to the people, and make proposal to them thus:—“My brethren, another year of our brief and hastening life is coming to an end; one season of our religious opportunities is drawing to a close, and another is about to commence. Let us devote this week to some special thoughtfulness; let us have daily prayers in the church, and meet every evening for solemn meditation and inquiry; let us take a deeper impression upon our hearts of the one great, momentous concern of life and duty; let us repent of past neglects, and begin the coming year anew; let us obey the monitions of these solemn hours, and dedicate ourselves afresh to immortal aims and hopes”;—would not this be fit and well?

Again, I entertain the opinion for myself, that some liturgical usages would be an improvement in our churches. Some persons pray better with the book; it fixes attention. The congregation, too, has the benefit of other prayers than those of its pastor. It has those thoughts of God that have breathed in the souls of some of the most venerable and pious men of past ages. Prayer comes to the people as it were more impersonally, and is clothed with more dignity and authority, as a voice coming out of the deeps of venerable experience and of the olden time. I would never dispense with the preacher's own original ministration, but I think that other influences might well mingle with it. And I think, too, that a book of prayers, in partial but common use among us, would be the most powerful conservative element that is left to us, to bind us together and to perpetuate our existence into future centuries.

Let me now say a word upon another point, in which I think that progress and improvement are needed; and that is, domestic piety. How much we owe of all our religious difficulties, and of the very struggle with temptation, to defects of early training, to the want of family religion of the right kind, we cannot know; but I believe that it is far more than we suspect. The great trial of virtue lies in this,—that we do not believe in it, do not believe, that is to say, that it is best and happiest, everywhere and every instant. Wealth, fame, pleasure, seem better. Why? Because the family influence that presided over our early years nurtured in us that impression, that deep distrust of the instant and all-sufficing power of goodness to make us content and happy. I do not deny, indeed, that in our imperfect and sensitive nature there are perilous tendencies to do evil; but I believe that they might be countervailed to an extent little thought of, by the right family influence. Show me a shal-

low-brained youth, devoted to mere fashion and worldly *éclat*, and I will show you one who has been taught that lesson somewhere, *in* the family or *out* of it; and if out of it, yet the lesson has probably had some countenance in the family. Show me one who is plunging into the vortex of ruinous pleasure, and I will show you one whose natural passions, indeed, are leading him astray, but who might have been saved, if the gentle bonds of cheerful love and piety at home had been thrown around him. These are terrible things to say; but they are true. Not without exceptions, indeed; I know that. O, there are agonizing martyrdoms of mothers and sisters for many a lost one! Let them continue to suffer and pray, for they may yet prevail.

I am enlarging upon this topic more than I intended. One word more, however, for it is to that that I wanted to come. *Religion* must be enthroned in a family. Some open, daily recognition there should be of the presence of God and of the infinite interest of our being. Now with many, here is a great difficulty. The head of a family feels that it would be so new and strange for him to pray in his family, and that he is incompetent, too; and he fears, moreover, that the service would become a wearisome and useless form. Now I lately witnessed a domestic scene that suggested to me, I confess, a new idea on this subject, and I wish to present it to you. It seemed to me, that is to say, to relieve a great deal of this difficulty, about the awkwardness of *beginning* and the feeling of incompetency. In the morning, when the family were assembled, a Bible and prayer-book were placed upon the table, and one of them read first a chapter and then a prayer, with no more formality than a simple and reverent bowing of the head in those who sat around. Suppose that even less were done at the first.

Suppose that the family should assemble in the morning simply to read the Scriptures together. It has been well said by some one, that the Psalms and portions of the Gospels are themselves most admirable liturgies. Psalmody and chants, too, might be introduced where there is gift and culture for them. When such a general usage was established, the reading of a prayer would easily follow; and then, perhaps, prayer voluntary and original, and on bended knee,—the fittest of all postures. And I cannot help thinking, that, in family devotions generally, all these modes might well be introduced and interchanged to save the service from formality, and give it variety and interest. No one, perhaps, is disposed or able always to do the same thing; and provided the daily and open recognition of the Great Presence is obtained, I should think that considerable liberty as to the manner is advisable.

I fear that I am occupying more time than I ought, but I did wish to say something also on preaching.

Next to thinking, the grandest office in the world is the communication, impression, direction of thought. To direct it in the young is the office of the educator; to impress it on the complicated affairs of an empire is the statesman's office; to communicate it to the great public is that of literature; to the friend or the social circle, that of private letter or conversation; to convey it in its sublimest form to the deepest heart of the people,—this is the preacher's office. It is an office that stands in the very structure of the world, and will stand for ever.

It is subject, however, to some fluctuations in the popular interest, and is passing through a rather remarkable trial now. Everywhere there is a demand for better, greater, stronger preaching. Never was the prophet-preacher more wanted or called for than now. And as if there were a

shrinking before this great demand, everywhere—in Germany, in England, and France, as well as in America—there is a growing disposition to decline this office, a remarkable decrease of students in theology.

There are, indeed, many causes for this; I cannot enter into them now; the subject of itself would require a large discourse; but the remedy, I conceive, both for the fewness and feebleness of the preachers, is to be found in a new and better culture of religion itself,—in a new and deeper sense of what this interest is, of its reality and grandeur, of its relations, wide-spreading, all-embracing, and striking to the depths of the world. Under this better culture, I believe that a preaching is to come forth, and preachers enough too, of a mould and might, of a freedom and spiritual manhood, to match the crisis of any age, and yet more, the everlasting demand of our great and solemn, and sorrowing and struggling humanity.

When shall it be? When shall religion cast off the swaddling-bands of childish superstition and unreasoning, dull acquiescence and technical formality, and be free and manly and strong and heroical and majestic as it ought to be? When, brethren, shall the preacher of God's word dismissing every robe of cumbrous custom, and casting off with it every shackle of the spirit, stand up in the manliness and beauty of a noble Christian meditation, and with the compact argument of a Demosthenes and the sacred earnestness of a Chrysostom, with a sage's wisdom and a prophet's fire, with the simplicity of a true and humble disciple, and the homely strength of a deep-feeling man, and the awful sobriety of the great Master of all teaching,—when shall he speak forth the things of religion as the sublime and precious verities that they are,—not aiming to make great discourses or splendid discourses, not satisfied with the cant of formal sermonizing, but giving simple, true,

calm, deep utterances, and so breathing religion, as it were a brother's heart, into the heart of poor, afflicted humanity? For so must it ever be, this our humanity,—a broken reed, a bruised piece of flesh, a battered form of earth and dust, till that divine life and inspiration enter into it, and raise it up from sin and sorrow, from disease and death.

I should be wanting to my subject, or to this part of it,—that is, progress and improvement,—if I did not speak of another topic; but I will do so briefly; and this, surely, not because I am indifferent to the matter, for I have an incessant anxiety to know and do my duty in regard to it. I speak, as you will anticipate, of the reform movements of the day.

Certainly a Christian body would be strangely out of place that had no sympathy with these movements. They touch human welfare in some of its most vital points. They appeal to Christian feeling in the most unambiguous terms. He who is not struck with horror at the ravages of war and intemperance and licentiousness,—he who can think of his fellow-men, bought and sold like cattle in the stall, without a thrill of pain and indignation,—he who does not desire through all feasible means, through Bible and tract distributions and through missions, to spread the light and power of redemption through the world, can hardly be considered a Christian.

The only question is, What are we to do, and how are we to do it, and in what spirit? And with regard to all this, it seems to me that a very great diversity of opinion and action must be admitted into such a body as ours, without disturbing its harmony or in fact compromising its consistency. We are not an anti-slavery society, nor a temperance nor a peace society, nor a society for the abolition of capital punishment; but we are a society of Liberal Christians, with certain religious opinions and objects that mark us and bind

us together. On all other subjects, there may be differences among us in perfect consistency with our bond. If I am disposed to a more conservative and kindlier treatment of social evils than my brother, he must bear with me, as I will try to bear with his ultraism, and, as I may think it, his radicalism and violence. Nay, more, I will have leave to think modestly about my own opinion, to think that possibly he may be more right than I am, without being construed to be a very wicked or bad man for that. We have different habits of thought, different ways of looking at life, different theories of the philosophy of life and history. I am disposed to legitimate as much as I can in the actual state of things under a Divine Providence. Another is disposed to innovate and condemn and tear to pieces. "Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not, and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth ; for God hath received him."

But one thing I do admit, that with a strong and resolute hand we are to help humanity in its great and fearful straits. I can bear with extravagance better than with apathy. I can bear with any ultraism better than the ultraism of indifference. Mistakes are excusable ; selfish coldness of heart to the great sorrows of humanity, or selfish pride of position set in fixed hostility to all amelioration, is inexcusable. There is evil in the world, there is wrong in the world, there is bondage in many a form besides that of chattel bondage ; and the sympathies and energies of all the world must be united to roll off these mighty burdens. In this work let me do my part in my way ; and do you do your part in your way. But let every one see that he does something, as he believes in Him who gave his life for the redemption of the world.

1st Series.

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ON RELIGIOUS FORMS.

Presl.
By ANDREW P. PEABODY.

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RELIGIOUS FORMS.

We have reason to apprehend that there is a growing neglect of religious forms among those who live to a great degree under the guidance of the principles, and in the enjoyment of the hopes, of the Gospel. There is a prevalent feeling of the worthlessness of forms, where religious sentiments are cherished and religious duties discharged. The feeling to which I refer might express itself in some such way as this : — “ So long as I am sincerely thankful for my daily food, it is utterly superfluous for me to give utterance to my thanks at my table. If I only endeavour to live religiously in my family, it can avail but little for me to offer formal prayers at the domestic altar. If I am diligent in the use of appropriate means for my personal religious culture, it matters not though my seat at the sanctuary be often vacant. Let me only in heart consecrate my children to their God, there is no need of my seeking for them the outward seal of consecration. While I am sincerely thankful to my Saviour, and endeavour to imitate him, I incur no merited reproach by refraining from the commemoration of him in the holy Supper. The heart is all in all. Let me only be conscious of a devout heart, I am indifferent to all that is outward and conventional. I will choose my

own forms, and express my feelings in my own way. These established forms, which others profess to enjoy so much, would be a restraint upon my freedom. They would tie down to set times and places thoughts and sentiments which are never out of time or out of place. Then, too, they are often substituted for the service of the heart,—they often cover a hollow heart,—they are often degraded by their connection with a grossly vicious life; and I prefer to let my character stand, without any false show, on its own merits."

I will suppose myself reasoning with a friend, who feels some or all of these objections to religious forms. I would first ask him, Are you consistent with yourself? In other concerns than those of religion, do you set aside established forms, and deem right purpose and feeling alone necessary? In social life, do you deem it enough to cherish kindness of heart, without expressing it in those forms of polite intercourse which custom has established as the current language of kind feeling? When you cherish peculiar reverence for an illustrious character or a noble deed, do you take no part in the commemoration of that person or that deed? On the various subjects of general interest, do you scrupulously avoid expressing your sentiments in the modes which your friends and neighbours employ for the expression of the same sentiments? Do you abjure forms altogether? I doubt whether you do or can. They are a kind of short-hand language used and read by all men, and he who should omit them on any but religious subjects would incur numberless inconveniences, mortifications, and embarrassments. But if you use them in other matters of interest, why omit them in religion?

Do you rejoin, that religion is a purely spiritual concern? So is benevolence, so is patriotism, so is veneration for the

illustrious dead. But though these are spiritual, you are not a pure spirit, but a spirit inhabiting for the present a material body, and so made that the acts of the body as surely reflect their character upon the soul, as the purposes of the soul execute themselves through the body. All outward forms, observed with a good degree of sincerity, deepen the feeling from which they flow. The forms of heart-felt politeness make one more and more benevolent. The hearty observance of patriotic anniversaries increases one's patriotism. The cordial commemoration of departed worth gives the image of those thus commemorated a more cherished place in the heart. Equally will religious forms, adopted and observed as the expression of sincere religious feeling, deepen that feeling within. The forms of domestic piety cannot be observed without bringing nearer and rendering more constant the idea of an overshadowing Providence, of unceasing responsibility, of the higher mansion and the more extended household to which your present home is but the outer court. Constant attendance with your friends and neighbours on the worship of the sanctuary cannot but deepen your reverence for the Father of all, and your sense of religious bonds and obligations as regards those whom you meet as fellow-worshippers and fellow-immortals. You cannot commemorate your Saviour in the holy Supper, without increasing your sense of his love, and quickening your resolution so to keep his commandments that you may abide in his love. The outward is constantly reacting upon the inward, and the soul is ever receiving deep and permanent impressions through all the avenues of sense.

But there is one little word, the use of which makes many people contented in the neglect of religious forms. It is the word *mere*, used with a sneer, employed by way

of disparagement. For *mere forms* I would not plead. Did I find any such in use, I would not lend my voice or pen towards prolonging them for a single day. But the observances for which I plead deserve no such title. They have a positive significance and appropriateness. Their absence leaves a perceptible void in the economy of life. If the members of a family sincerely own the presence and love of God, and desire to be united by ties of religious sympathy and duty, do not the words of prayer, though uttered at stated seasons, flow as full of meaning as the morning greeting or the mutual attentions and courtesies of the table? Are they not equally the expression of sentiments which it ought to be more natural to utter than to suppress? Public worship, too,— is not this an expression of sentiments liable to be overlooked and yet most needful to be borne in mind,— namely, of the essential equality that underlies all the distinctions of life, of our common needs and frailties, our common hopes and destiny, our relations and duties as members of the great family of our common Father? And what can be more full of meaning than the appointed rite of Christian communion, in which we borrow from our homes and tables a form, which in its every circumstance suggests the idea of family union among the members and with the unseen Head of the spiritual household? These forms may all be observed without using any idle words or vain repetitions,— without a gesture that lacks meaning, or a word that flows not from the heart. They barely, by fixing time and place, insure the utterance of sentiments which, did we fail to express, we should deprive speech of its noblest uses, and our daily life of its seasons of closest union with the life of heaven.

Do you say, however, that the religious sentiment belongs to all times and places, while it is the tendency of forms to

limit it to certain special seasons ? The religious sentiment does indeed belong to all times and places ; but all are not equally favorable for its nurture. We are often exposed to influences adverse to the spirit of piety ; and many of us spend the greater part of our lives in scenes and pursuits, which of themselves suggest no religious associations, and do nothing towards cherishing devotional feeling. There is, in many of the outward objects which we pursue, a tendency gradually to steal away and engross the affections, to make the character less and less spiritual, and to lower the standard of religious feeling and action. There is, in the daily toils and collisions of life, a wear and tear of the spirit, a waste of principle and sentiment, which can be repaired only by diligent and faithful effort. Is it not, then, well that we should have some stated seasons and means for religious cultivation strewn at frequent intervals on the path of life, — times when our thoughts are forced into religious channels, — times of self-recollection and self-admonition, — seasons for trimming the lamp when the oil gets low, — for feeding the flame which we wish and endeavour to keep all the time burning ? I know that these seasons must be attended with different degrees of interest ; that we may sometimes bring to them cold and languid hearts, at other times a fervor of feeling which no outward form can adequately express. But when we are in the lowest frame of mind, the observance of some appropriate form of piety may make the heart-pulses quicker and stronger, or at least may prevent the flame of devotion from utterly expiring, or neutralize some positively bad influence to which we should otherwise have yielded ; while, in our seasons of the highest fervor, the forms of our religion are so simple and flexible as never to imprison the full soul within a low and narrow range of thought, but leave entire scope for its purest and loftiest aspirations.

Again, do religious forms seem to you ostentatious, and connect themselves in your mind with the display and parade of piety? I look upon them in a very different light. I regard them as adapted to prevent ostentation, and to cut off the appearance and suspicion of show and cant. Every true and deep feeling deserves and craves expression. The emotions, when strong, will not stay pent up in the soul, but must and will somehow find utterance, whether timely or otherwise. Such must especially be the case with religious feeling, which is in its very nature social, — reaches out its embrace towards kindred and friends while it lays hold on heaven, — demands human sympathy while it invokes Divine love. It would be harsh and unnatural for a sincerely religious man never to unite with others in the expression of his devotional thoughts and aspirations. But were there no established seasons and modes for such expression, however natural and spontaneous, it would often seem obtrusive and untimely. It might flow from one heart when others were unprepared to respond to it, and might thus repel and disgust those whom at a more convenient season it would improve and edify. But through these established forms the right feeling may always find its unforced and appropriate expression, and, in the prepared and expectant frame of mind in which all come together at the family or the public altar, no word need fall unheeded, no thought need be sent back chilled and lifeless to the heart that gave it utterance.

Consider, too, how deep our need frequently is of modes in which the religious sentiment may express itself, at once without constraint and without ostentation. There are seasons when, it seems to me, it would be almost martyrdom for a person of any religious sensibility to dispense with the forms of devotion. When special blessings have been shed

upon the domestic circle, when a merciful Providence has lifted off from one of its members the burden of sickness or rolled back the shadow of death, when the long absent have been restored and the divided household again made one, is there not intense need of holier words than those of mere congratulation,— of a tribute of praise, in which all shall bear part? In bereavement and sorrow, too, there seems to me the broadest possible contrast between the desolation of a home where prayer is never offered, and the consolation and hope that flow in upon the souls that together bear their burden to the footstool of Divine mercy, and open their deep grief in supplication to the God of pity. And when one has been called from our own to the heavenly household, how many of my readers can bear testimony with me to the healing, elevating power of the rite of Christian communion,— of the season when the veil is almost parted, and the felt fellowship of the holy dead gives a double consecration to the emblems of the Saviour's love?

Do you still maintain that true spirituality is independent of things outward, and should disdain all external aids? It seems to me that spirituality of character has directly the opposite tendency. We cannot get rid of our connection with the outward world. Our bodies, our relations to material things, are stubborn facts, which we cannot deny or evade; and the truly spiritual man will recognize these facts, by attaching spiritual associations, so far as he finds it possible, to the outward objects with which he must needs be daily conversant. Unable to dispense with the material world, he will bend it to spiritual uses. He will connect its scenes and seasons with thoughts and images of the unseen and the eternal, with pure affections and lofty aspirations. That such is the tendency of spiritual tastes and habits, we may perceive from what takes place in various departments

and relations of common life. Thus, for instance, to a coarse and low mind, the dress or jewelry of a deceased friend is like any other raiment, his favorite walk like any other path, his peculiar tastes mere whims not worth a thought after he has gone. But to the refined and spiritual a special consecration rests on whatever the departed friend has used or loved,—there are certain objects set aside from their kind, and hallowed by the most tender associations, for his sake,—there is often a ritual of affection kept up for months and years in memory of his cherished tastes and habits. It is by the most spiritual that all the forms of courtesy and kindness in domestic and social life are the most dearly prized and the most scrupulously observed. Now there is surely no reason why religion should not, like every other pure affection, appropriate its own share of outward forms and objects, shedding over them the loftiest of all associations, and consecrating them to the noblest and holiest uses. Indeed, Christianity seems to me, even by its mere ritual, to render essential aid in the cultivation of spirituality, inasmuch as it extends its hallowing forms over a very wide range of outward scenes and objects, blessing the table and the family meeting, making the river and the fountain typical of its own purity, and spreading its commemorative festival with the choicest fruits of a benignant Providence.

Do you still say, These forms cripple my freedom? I reply, that there is a kind of freedom which they do cripple, and which ought to be crippled. There are many, who are equally unwilling to dismiss religious thoughts and to own religious responsibilities. They want to wear the crown, but not to bear the cross. So long as religious ideas float dimly before their minds, and seem to present a distant and possible resource in future emergencies, they bid them

welcome ; but they refuse to give shape and definiteness to these ideas, and to induct them with a pervading and controlling power over their hearts and lives. They do not like the process of self-searching. They do not like to hear the admonishing voice in little things, and on the constantly recurring occasions of duty in daily life. They prefer a sentimental to a practical religion. Now one principal office of religious forms, when faithfully observed, is to invite to self-examination, to reveal deficiencies, and to prescribe an ever higher standard of devotion. Thus the father who leads the devotions of the family altar is held back from utter worldliness and levity. He cannot assume his priestly robes in the morning, and cast them off before mid-day, without his sins coming up in remembrance when he again appears before his God. In the service of the Lord's Supper, too, there is admonition as well as comfort. We there come into self-comparison with our Saviour. His character is a mirror for our own. We are made sensible of our frailties, follies, and sins, and urged on to new diligence in duty and fervor of spirit, by every remembrance of Christ, by the voices of his cross and the power of his death. But this is the only restraint which religious forms can impose, — the restraint of duty, the yoke of Christ. They create no new obligations, but only render us more sensible of those that already exist, and more solicitous to discharge them. Our responsibilities are born with us, and grow with us, and cannot die with us. They are not of our own choosing, but of God's ordaining, and can be neglected only to our unspeakable loss and sorrow. Ought we not, then, to cherish those religious forms which may remind us of them, and suggest essential motives and bestow needed aid in meeting and bearing them? The freedom which sets these forms aside, or holds them subject to momentary convenience or caprice,

is indeed congenial to an indolent and sluggish mind. In a worldly point of view, it is comfortable to have our relation to Christianity so loose and indefinite, that we may obey the passing impulse, whatever it be, whether it bid us float on the current of superficial religious sentiment, or push us off into a broader license of speech and conduct than accords with Christian duty. But the all-important question is, How far is this freedom consistent with the actual growth of character? How will it be regarded in future years, from the bed of death, from the judgment-seat of Christ?

In treating of religious forms, I have not given the prominence which some might give to the power of our example over others; for I cannot admit that either writer or reader is so little in need of these forms, on his own account, as to be called upon to adopt them from purely disinterested and philanthropic motives. And where one performs the ritual of piety, or any part of it, in that patronizing way and spirit which seem to say, "All this I do, not for my own sake, but for the sake of others, who need it more," there is so much heartlessness in the service as to repel and disgust those whom it is designed to draw. I place as high an estimate as any one on the power of example, but I want no one to go coldly to work setting an example; for the efficacy of example depends on its not being set,—on its being the simple, unostentatious result of conviction, principle, and conscience. Yet it may increase our esteem for religious forms and our desire to participate in them, to reflect how essential they are to the diffusion and transmission of our religion. They are and must ever be, to a great degree, the expression and embodiment of the amount of religious faith and principle existing in the community. They are, therefore, an essential means of religious impression and influence; and their efficacy depends on the numbers that en-

gage in them, and the apparent sincerity with which they are attended. Thus in a religious congregation the minister is not the sole preacher, nor do his words in the pulpit have merely the power over the individual heart which the same words might have in the house or by the way-side. His people, when they assemble in full numbers, help him preach, and preach to one another. They bear, all to each, concurrent and accumulated testimony to the dignity and the momentous importance of the truths and duties to which they have consecrated their house of worship. When, on the other hand, the members of a congregation let trifling causes, which would keep them from no secular engagement, reduce their numbers, they not only chill and discourage their minister by the sight of their vacant places; but those who absent themselves preach against him, bear the opposite testimony to that which they expect him to utter, and leave on many hearts the impression that religion is but a secondary concern, and that its duties may be fittingly held in subservience to any paltry considerations of ease, convenience, or caprice. So, too, by the use or neglect of any of the appointed or established forms of Christianity, one cannot help bearing testimony for or against the religion which must in these forms have its outward habitation and utter its voices. Let me, then, solicit you, reader, not to bear false witness; and, if you at heart respect and love religion, I would ask you whether, in neglecting its forms, you are not bearing false witness, — uttering a testimony against conviction and against conscience.

In conclusion, let me refer briefly, but most emphatically, to the example of Christ. He, if any one, was above ordinances, too spiritual to need them, too exalted to stoop to them. But, either because he found in them a fit expression for his own spirituality, or because they brought him into

closer fellowship with the brethren for whose sake he lived and died, or because he wished to commend them by his own example to those who might look down upon them as beggarly elements suited only to the earliest and lowest stages of spiritual progress,—for one or all of these reasons, he was constant and assiduous in his attendance upon the outward forms of piety. He sought the baptism of water. He hallowed the Sabbath-day. He frequented the worshiping assembly. He broke the bread, and poured the cup of blessing. He held sacred every religious observance, which might fence in the fold for the feeblest lamb in his flock. “It is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master, and for the servant that he be as his Lord.”

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THE

GOSPEL NARRATIVES:

THEIR

ORIGIN, PECULIARITIES, AND TRANSMISSION.

BY HENRY A. MILES.

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C A M B R I D G E :
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P R E F A C E.

WHAT was the origin of our four Gospel Narratives? If the authors of these wrote independently, how can we account for their verbal coincidences? If they copied from one another, how can we account for their discrepancies? Under what circumstances did each writer perform his work? How far did his situation and character and purpose give shape to his composition? How have these Gospels been transmitted down to our times? — Such are the chief questions which it is the object of this book to answer. It is believed that instruction on these points should form a part of a Christian education. They constitute a branch of the evidences of Christianity on which all historical belief must rest, but to which, for the most part, no general attention is paid. How many of the flippant objections of infidelity would lose all their power to unsettle faith, if some knowledge

on this subject were widely diffused ! Perhaps it has been neglected through the want of a small book, that may briefly and clearly present the information now found only in professional, and, to most readers, inaccessible treatises. This want it is here proposed to supply. While the author has had reference to the higher classes in our Sunday schools, for whose use he hopes this work may serve as a manual, he has also had his eye upon other readers, and has sought to make a book suitable for family and parish libraries. He has studied accuracy in drawing his materials from the most approved sources, and has been ambitious of earning for himself only the negative merits of lucid arrangement and perspicuous statement.

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THE GOSPEL NARRATIVES.

CHAPTER I.

STATEMENT OF THE QUESTION.

THE word *Gospel*, meaning good news, properly denotes the revelations which the history of Christ contains. These revelations are the “*glad tidings* which shall be to all people.” But in process of time that word has been applied to the history itself, and denotes a book describing the birth, life, words, sufferings, and death of the Son of God.

We have four distinct books of this kind, written evidently by four different men. We believe them to have been written by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, not long after the ascension of Christ. Matthew and John were his personal followers; Mark received his materials from Peter, another follower of Christ; while Luke, as he tells us in his preface, set in order the things which had been delivered to him by those who from the beginning had been eyewitnesses and ministers of the word. Thus they did not undertake to write without being well informed of the events which they have related. Hence the confidence with which they appealed to the sources of their knowledge:—“That which

was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, declare we unto you."

Did they all four write together? Did any of them copy what another had written? Did they all write independently, each with no knowledge of the others' compositions? Here are several theories suggested; which of them do the facts of history compel us to take?

As regards the Gospel of John, we cannot be at much loss to decide. When he composed his narrative, he had undoubtedly seen what Matthew, Mark, and Luke had previously written. This is evident from the whole character of his work. Thus he for the most part records only what Jesus said and did in Judea, as the other Evangelists confined themselves chiefly to what Jesus said and did in Galilee. What they fully related he omits, their omissions he supplies, and some slight errors of theirs he corrects. He alludes to our Saviour's baptism, and to the last Supper, though he has not described those events, evidently supposing that they would be well known by means of the other Gospels; and in the end of his history he says,—“Many other signs truly did Jesus, which are not written in this book.” He knew many of them were written in the books of the other Evangelists. His tacit appeal to their writings must be understood as an approval of what they had previously published.

But now what shall we say of the other three Gospels? When we compare them with one another, we find two facts, which at first we hardly know how to reconcile with any theory as to their origin. We find that in some places they agree with one another, not merely in describing the same thing, but in describing it word for word alike; while in other places they not only use different words in describing the same thing, but give quite different accounts.

Examples need not be adduced of what must be so familiar to every one who has compared the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke together. Open them where we will, we occasionally find, in descriptions of the same occurrence, whole verses which in all three of the writers are word for word alike, and which seem as if they must have been copied one from the other. But we do not read far before we find that there are also great differences between them, not merely in arrangement and quotation, but in the statement of facts. These differences seldom relate to very material facts. Merely to show their character, one or two examples may be adduced.

There was a dispute among the disciples on the question, who of them should be greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Jesus rebuked their folly by setting a little child before them, and saying, " Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Now Matthew says that the disciples referred this dispute to Jesus. " At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven ? " — Matt. xviii. 1.

But an exactly opposite account is given in Mark, who says that Christ inquired for the subject of their dispute, and that the disciples declined to name it. " And being in the house, he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way ? But they held their peace ; for by the way they had disputed among themselves who should be the greatest." — Mark ix. 33, 34.

How clearly marked is the difference between these two statements ! Yet we do not find it difficult to reconcile them. We know that Peter, James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, claimed to be greatest among the disciples, and on their way to Capernaum they probably advanced their claims, which

led to the dispute. Other disciples, without claiming the first rank, might think it unjust to be treated as inferiors ; and Matthew, who was a humble publican, was probably of this party. He doubtless brought the matter in dispute before Christ. The Saviour reserved the discussion until they had entered the house, and then made the inquiry recorded by Mark. Peter, James, and John made no answer, for they would expect reproof. Both statements are thus reconciled by supposing that Matthew related the part to which he was knowing, and that Mark, who derived his materials from Peter, related the part to which he was knowing, but that neither related the whole. There is no real contradiction between them. But there is a seeming contradiction. Taken simply by themselves, it would appear, that, if Matthew's account were true, Mark's must be false. If it was not for what we incidentally learn, in some other part of the Gospel, of the ambitious claim of Peter, James, and John, it would not be easy to make any consistent agreement between them.

We may take another case. The account of Peter's denying his Lord is recorded by all four Evangelists. Both Matthew and Mark give us to understand that the second denial was made to one of the waiting *maids* in the high-priest's palace. Matthew xxvii. 71. Mark xiv. 69. But Luke's account is, that the second denial was made to a *man*. Luke xxii. 58. This is one of the places which John's Gospel corrects and explains. He tells us that the second denial was made to a *great number* of servants and officers, who were standing with Peter by the fire in the high-priest's palace. John xviii. 25. This makes the other accounts appear true. But had it not been for this explanation, we should not know which statement to believe.

Now the question that arises is this: How shall we explain the many verbal coincidences, and, at the same time, the many marked discrepancies, which are found in the first three Gospel histories? Shall we say that their authors wrote in concert, or that one saw the work of his predecessor and copied it? This will explain the resemblances. But how shall we then account for the differences? Shall we then take the other view, and conclude that they are perfectly independent historians, writing without the slightest knowledge of each other's works? This will account for the differences. But what shall we then say of their resemblances?

CHAPTER II.

THE EVANGELISTS NOT COPYISTS.

We should considerably relieve the difficulty before us, if we could prove that the first three Evangelists did not copy one from the other. And this is the impression which must be left strongly on the mind when we compare their narratives together. They arrange events in different order. They assign different occasions to the same discourse or parable. We should not have looked for this, either if they had written together, or if one had copied from the other. It is not easy to believe that one writer copied the other merely that he might make some small additions of original matter, for such additions in any one Gospel are too inconsiderable to render such a supposition credible. Then there is no trace of any other Gospel in that one, whichever

it be, that you assume to be a copy. Verbal coincidences nowhere lie together in masses. Identity in the use of words nowhere extends unbroken through long passages. The same word or phrase occurs only here and there, in separated and scattered places.

Moreover, the Evangelists had no motive to copy from one another. As preachers of Christianity, they were all well acquainted with the transactions which it was their purpose to record. Each one, therefore, was competent to draw up his own independent account. Besides, each one's account appears to be his own,—his own style, his own associations, his own arrangement. It is of still more importance to observe, that each one's knowledge of every event appears to be his own independent knowledge. To a description of almost all the prominent events of our Saviour's life, each Evangelist has contributed something. One noticed one circumstance, another a second, another a third, so that, as in the case already adduced of the denial of Peter, we have not a full description until we put all their works together. When we come to examine each Gospel by itself, we shall see still further evidence to show that these histories were written independently, at different times, in different places, and for different purposes. The discrepancies between them are just such as we might expect from three independent historians.

No contemporaneous and independent histories are precisely alike. Inspiration would not secure the Evangelists from discrepancies common to all other writers, because inspiration does not mean omniscience. Even if we found inexplicable contradictions between the Gospels, it would by no means follow that the history they give is false. The only just inference would be, that their authors were not infallible. Between different histories of England, for ex-

ample, there are most mysterious contradictions as to striking and prominent events. But no one concludes that these histories are all fabulous, and that these events never transpired. So, also, in the examination of witnesses, and in the common rumors of our neighbourhood and town, we never suffer the fact of many contradictory accounts of any alleged event to preclude all belief. We involuntarily have a stronger faith that something has happened. We question only the perfect accuracy of narrators. This is all we could reasonably doubt, did we find inexplicable contradictions in the Gospels. But such contradictions are not here found to perplex the fair inquirer. He finds only such discrepancies in the relation of minor events as must always mark independent accounts. When one individual paints a city from the east side, and another one from the west, both must, indeed, represent the highest and most prominent steeples and buildings ; but in other respects the two sketches may and must be very different from each other. And yet each may give a faithful representation.

CHAPTER III.

THEIR LIFE IN JERUSALEM.

BEFORE we can see the cause of the verbal coincidences in the Gospels, we must give attention to some historical facts.

After our Lord's resurrection, he showed himself to his disciples, on various occasions, for the space of forty days. Just before his ascension, he directed them to come together

at Jerusalem, after he should leave them, and there for a while to tarry. Luke xxiv. 49. Acts i. 4. There was deep wisdom in this direction. Jerusalem was in the near neighbourhood of the wonderful scenes of the crucifixion, the resurrection, and the ascension, and the Saviour would have his disciples bear witness to these facts on the very spot of their occurrence. It was the most public witness they could bear, before all the inhabitants of that city, and before all the people from all parts of Judea, who came up at the great national festivals. It was right that the disciples should challenge the most open and public investigation. Nothing had been done in a corner, and every thing which had been told to them in private, they were to proclaim upon the house-top. Their constant and bold preaching in such a place as Jerusalem would be a proof that they were not ashamed of their religion, although its founder had been crucified as a vile criminal. It would be an expression of their belief, that their great cause did not die with their leader, while a more central place for the propagation of the truth could not be selected. Here were Parthians and Medes, Cretes and Arabians, strangers from Egypt and Rome. Converts made among these would spread the religion all over the world. So important was it that the disciples should keep together at Jerusalem, as commanded by their Master.

And they did keep together there. We are told in the Acts of the Apostles, i. 12, that from the scene of their Saviour's ascension they returned at once unto Jerusalem, and went up into an upper room, where they abode together. While they dwelt here, all the events transpired which are recorded in the first seven chapters of the Acts,—the election of an Apostle to take the place of Judas, the gift of tongues on the day of Pentecost, the cure of the lame man

at the gate of the temple, the imprisonment and release of John, the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira, and the martyrdom of Stephen. We do not know exactly how long a space of time these events covered. It could not have been less than several years. During these, the disciples were continually repeating in each other's hearing the story of Christ's life and words.

Now let us try to enter into their situation. Their Head and Master, to whom they had looked for counsel, and on whom they had leaned for support, had been taken from them. They were left like a little band of brothers who have suddenly lost their father. They were in the heart of a great city, in which they felt alone, for among its busy throngs they at first found but little sympathy, being either pitied as deluded men or despised as deceivers. If we had not been told that they *dwell* together, how naturally should we have presumed this, and that they continually conferred with one another, and endeavoured to comfort, sustain, and animate each other's hearts! And in these frequent interviews, what would so much occupy their thoughts, and be the constant topic of their conversation, as the wonderful events of their Master's life, and the impressive instructions that he gave them? Doubtless, at their first interview their remembrances of these were very much alike in their minds. The more accurately they could recall the very words that Christ used, the more coincident would these remembrances be. Nor would it be difficult for them to recall his precise words. In those days the art of writing was not common in the class to which the Apostles belonged. The memory on this account received a greater cultivation. Much longer histories than either of our Gospels were very often treasured up in the memory alone. To tasks of memory, it is not unlikely the disciples themselves had been accustomed, when

Jews. The Rabbis required their pupils to repeat what was taught them, and in this way an immense mass of traditional accounts was handed down from one generation to another.

Then what strong motives had the Apostles to make them remember both the words of their absent Teacher, and the wonderful events of his life! All their interests and hopes were bound up in these things. Gratitude and reverence, their loneliness and danger, their duty to their Master's cause, and the uncertainty that hung over their prospects,—every thing would send their minds back to that one fountain of light and hope, the life and words of Christ. The sick healed, the lame, the blind, the deaf, the insane, restored, the very dead raised, and those touching parables they had heard, of the good Samaritan, the prodigal son, the rich man and Lazarus,—how was it possible that they could forget these? Their recollections of them must have been their spring of action by day, and their meditation by night. This was their Comforter. The spirit of truth was with them, and brought all things to their remembrance.

Now there was one cause constantly at work to make them *express* their remembrances alike. They were constantly teaching in one another's hearing. Few and feeble as they were, they soon had converts. A large number was added to them on the day of Pentecost. Soon the fame of their wonderful works spread abroad. The sick were brought in beds, and laid in the streets where the Apostles lived. Believers were added to the Church daily. We can easily conceive what an intense curiosity all these would feel to learn the precise words and actions of Jesus. It was now the business of the Apostles to gratify this curiosity. Their discourses must have consisted, in great part, of simple narratives concerning the life of Jesus. It was a matter of ne-

cessity that they should be continually speaking about him, describing his miracles to establish his authority, the minor events of his life to illustrate his character, and his parables and discourses to set forth his doctrine. Thus month after month, and year after year, they were repeating the same narrative which we find recorded in the Gospels. As they did this continually, in each other's hearing, to different persons who wished to hear precisely the same things, how obvious is it that they would soon acquire a similar style of narration. At each repetition, the narrative would assume more and more a common form in each of their minds. We can name three peculiarities which their method of telling the story of Christ would naturally acquire.

1. There would be the greatest verbal coincidence in their repetitions of the words of Jesus. Because, if they remembered his words correctly, the accounts of them must be identically the same. Naturally attaching a peculiar sacredness to the precise words which he used, they would take the greatest care to recall them correctly, and for this purpose they would help and correct one another's remembrances.

2. There would be less verbal coincidence in the narrative parts of their story, those, namely, in which they described events without repeating the words of Jesus. Here each disciple would adopt a method somewhat peculiar to himself, though naturally there would be some verbal resemblance in the use of particular phrases and connecting sentences.

3. In the matter of order and arrangement there would be the least resemblance of all. They would probably select their topics with reference to the previous knowledge or particular curiosity of their hearers. Each one, therefore, would group particular parables, miracles, and discourses of

our Lord together in his own way. Where nothing was to be gained by chronology, there would be no regard and no pretence to it, and thus would be formed a diversity of associations in regard to time and the sequence of events.

Here, then, the Apostles lived together, and told the same story, over and over again, to the converts who were added daily to the Church. Matthew and John were here, for their names are given in the list found in Acts i. 13. Luke was undoubtedly here, for he was an early convert, and in his preface to his Gospel he tells us that he obtained his knowledge from those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, that is to say, from the Apostles. And Mark was here, for his mother's house was one of the places where the Apostles used to meet. Acts xii. 12.

CHAPTER IV.

THEIR WRITTEN NARRATIVES SHAPED BY THEIR PREVIOUS ORAL ONES.

At length the day came when they could no longer live together in Jerusalem. Their bold preaching, and their convincing miracles, made so many converts as to attract the attention of the priests and rulers. Then followed days of persecution, when they were all driven from the city, and were scattered abroad. But persecution always strengthens what it would suppress. The effect of banishing thousands of converts from Jerusalem was to give increased life and power to the new religion. Its friends were now sent into

all the principal cities and villages round about, who became so many preachers, made more ardent by persecution. They found that the fame of their banishment had everywhere gone before them, and people were everywhere asking what the new doctrine was. Hence bodies of believers were soon gathered in Samaria, at Damascus, Antioch, Cesarea, Cyprus, Corinth, and the wrath of man was made to praise God.

In these places, the first desire of all converts was to hear those who had been personal followers of the Saviour. Hence the Apostles were pressed to tell what they knew, and to testify to what they had seen. But soon it appeared that the call came from more places than they could visit, and from more converts than they could personally address. To supply the want of their attendance in person, several of them wrote out what they had so often preached, and copies of their narrations were sent to instruct and comfort believers. Thus Matthew, about the year 65, wrote out a short record of the Saviour's life and words, for the use of the churches in Judea. At that time Mark was with Peter in Rome, and there he put his short Gospel history into writing. Luke, before either of these accounts were written, as is probable, sent his history to his Gentile friend Theophilus; and John, long after the others had published their narratives, contributed the additions and corrections which are found in his Gospel, for the benefit of the church at Ephesus.

Thus each writer had his own independent object to accomplish, and wrote in his own independent manner. Still, each one gave his account in *writing* very much in the same way they had so long been accustomed to give it in *preaching*, when they lived together in Jerusalem. And to men so little practised in writing as the Apostles were, and

intent only upon telling the simple truth in the shortest and most direct manner, could any thing be more natural than the course they took? May we not feel increased confidence in the truth and honesty of these men, when we see that in banishment, amid persecution, and no longer sustained by each other's sympathy and support, they persisted in publishing the same narrative they had formerly preached in Jerusalem? Nor should we fail to admire the good providence of God, which, out of the persecution which separated the disciples from their home and from one another, and sent them forth to a perilous life to be soon terminated by a martyr's death, created a necessity of making at once, when all was well remembered and well known, a clear record of words and events so intensely interesting to our dearest wants and hopes.

But those single-minded writers little knew to what a work they had seated themselves. They only thought of enlightening their personal friends, or at most, of comforting a few feeble churches, scattered through Judea. They little thought that the roll, which seemed to them so brief, fragmentary, and perishable, would float over the whole world, and down to all time. The thing which, had it ever been thought of, must have seemed impossible with man, has been possible with God.

CHAPTER V.

**APPLICATION OF THIS VIEW TO THE FACTS OF THE
NARRATIVE.**

THE question with which we are next concerned is this, — Will the view above given account for all the facts in the case? Will it explain both the resemblances and the discrepancies found in the Gospels? If this explanation be the true one, it will shed not only a consistent, but a clear, convincing, and interesting light upon the Evangelical narrative. We will proceed, then, to apply it to the facts in the case.

We have seen that the Apostles, in giving their accounts of Jesus, would be anxious first of all to repeat his words exactly; and that between their statements of what he said, if their statements are worthy of reliance, there must be very great resemblances. We have seen, also, that in the mere narrative parts of their histories each writer would be free to use his own words, and that here the resemblances would be less. Now how stands the fact?

We will take first the Gospel of Matthew. Of the whole book, only one sixth part consists of passages verbally coincident with one or both of the other two Gospels. Of this small part, seven eighths occur in the recital of the words of others, mostly the words of Jesus, while only about one eighth is found in mere narration.

We next look to the Gospel of Mark. The proportion of coincident passages to the whole contents of the Gospel is about one sixth. Of this not one fifth occurs in the narrative.

Luke has still less agreement of expression with the other Evangelists. The passages in which it is found amount only to about a tenth of his Gospel, and not one twentieth part of this in the narrative.

But then we should not expect the aggregate of verbal resemblances to be as great in the narrative part of the Gospels as it is in that where the words of others are professedly quoted, because the narrative part is not one half of the whole Gospels. The narrative part occupies but one fourth of Matthew's Gospel, one half of Mark's Gospel, and one third of Luke's. "It may be easily computed, therefore, that the proportion of verbal coincidence found in the narrative part of each Gospel, compared with what exists in the other part, is about in the following ratios: in Matthew as one to somewhat more than two, in Mark as one to four, and in Luke as one to ten."

These definite proportions were obtained by the careful investigations of Andrews Norton of Cambridge, to whose learned work on the Genuineness of the Gospels the reader is referred, Vol. I., Appendix, p. ci. How important they are to support the view before presented, that our present *written* Gospels grew out of previous *spoken* ones, must be obvious at once. If the Evangelists had copied from one another's writings, we should have looked for just as many coincidences in the narrative part of their Gospels as in the other part. If, on the other hand, they were not familiar with each other's mode of narration, we should not have expected in the narrative part any coincidences at all.

We may add another consideration. In the narrative parts of the Gospels, the coincidences are of a *kind* which we should expect to find. Those who learn, from each other's frequent repetition, the form of narrating any events, seldom repeat long portions word for word alike. They

coincide only in the general mould of thought, and in the use of peculiar phrases and connecting sentences. We have before taken notice of the fact, that in the Gospels verbal coincidences nowhere lie together in masses. They occur, a few words here, and a few words there, in peculiar phrases and colloquial expressions. "*And Jesus answered them and said,*" "*And after this it came to pass,*" "*Verily, verily, I say unto you*";—these and like expressions give an appearance of similarity between the narrative portions of different Gospels; and it is just such sentences as these which, when we often hear and tell the same story, we are most prone to catch and repeat from one another's lips.

And, lastly, that our first three Gospels took their form and character from the narratives which the Apostles used to give, when they lived and taught together in Jerusalem, is rendered still further probable by the little regard which their writers pay to chronological arrangement. It was before remarked, that in their oral teachings they would be likely to neglect the order of time, and to group together particular parables, or discourses, or miracles, with reference to the state of information or curiosity of their hearers. Now, in our written Gospels we find this disregard to the natural sequence of events, and this grouping of different things together. There is frequently a particular class of miracles, or a particular series of instructions, evidently cast by each writer in the same general style of description; but each is made up without the slightest mark of any regard to the order of time. They bear traces of having been distinct narratives by themselves. They are connected together by associations peculiar to each Evangelist. Hence, to make out a satisfactory Gospel chronology is one of the most difficult things in Biblical study. What we lose in this respect, we more than gain in the greater assurances we have of the

perfect artlessness and careless simplicity of an honest purpose, in which the histories of Christ were written.

Indeed, how much do we owe to the fact, that these histories were written in this way and by these men! The very circumstance that they were unlearned men made them better qualified to be scribes of the truth. They have given us nothing but *facts*, — not a word of comment, or inference, or even note of admiration. A learned man of their times would have been pretty sure to thrust in something of his own into his pages; and how suspicious, how out of keeping with the simple and sublime words of Jesus, would it have appeared! Who does not see that the charm and power of the Gospel narrative would have been lost, if it had been handed over to the verbose periods and oratorical descriptions of such a writer as Josephus? The Evangelists have given us nothing but *facts*. When we read their words, we feel that we are in the presence of facts, whose solemn reality moved their deepest natures, and overawed all merely personal feelings. And it is this air of simple, sincere, straightforward, and solemn reality, everywhere spread over their writings, that gives them their power. The Christian feels them to be true. The skeptic himself feels them to be true. The French infidel, Diderot, was one day caught learning his little daughter to read the Gospels. When reminded of his inconsistency, he replied, "After all, there is no history like this." And there is not. The learning of the schools, and the wisdom of ages, have not given us a work like theirs, who sought only to place us in their position, that we might ourselves hear Him who spake as never man spake. Thus hath God chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty.

CHAPTER VI.

NOTICES OF THE LIFE OF MATTHEW.

MATTHEW, called also Levi, was a Galilean, of the Jewish religion, and an inhabitant of Capernaum. His business was that of a publican, that is, a tax-gatherer; and he discharged the duties pertaining to that office at the lake of Galilee. It was an humble station, and among the Jews a despised one. Those who filled it were appointed by the Romans, to whom the Jews were now subject, and for whose use these taxes were collected. To pay tribute to them was not only a constant acknowledgment and badge of subjection and servitude, but to the Jews it was something more galling still. It wounded their religious as well as their patriotic pride. It was a thought of unmitigated bitterness, that the people of God should be held under the hated yoke of idolaters. The office itself being thus detestable, those who held and exercised it were universally scorned.

There were two orders, however, among the publicans,—the receivers-general, and their deputies. The former were usually selected from the higher classes of society, and were sometimes men of distinction. One of this order is named by Luke, xix. 2, who is called chief among the publicans, and a rich man. But the deputies were reckoned ignoble and contemptible even by the Gentiles themselves, and were, in fact, for the most part, rapacious and unmerciful men. Some one asked Theocritus which was the most cruel of all beasts. He answered, “Among the beasts of the wilderness, the bear and the lion; among the beasts of the city, the publican and the parasite.” Members of this

order are frequently classed in the Scriptures with sinners. "Let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a sinner," is a phrase which expresses strongly the universal ban which was suspended over them. We are told, that, though a publican might be a Jew, he was hardly recognized as such by his countrymen. He was not allowed to enter the temple, nor to give testimony in courts of justice; and the very gifts which his devotion might prompt him to render were rejected from the altar of Jehovah as unclean and abominable.

Of this abhorred class, Matthew was a member. The duties of his office were discharged a little out of Capernaum, and by the shore of the lake of Galilee. Here his situation was such, that he soon learned whatever occurred in the adjoining country, to which the lake was a central place of business and resort. The fame of Jesus was not long in coming to his ears. Of his baptism on the banks of Jordan, of his sermon on the mount near Capernaum, and of the miracles which immediately followed, he had doubtless heard; and it is reasonable to suppose that he had resolved, that, as soon as a convenient opportunity allowed, he would unite himself with one whom so many things pointed out as the long-expected Messiah.

An opportunity was soon presented. Jesus, in going from Capernaum to some of the cities and villages on the shore of the lake, had occasion to pass by the place where the taxes were received, called in the Gospels *the receipt of custom*, and here, either having before heard of Matthew, or now receiving from his own lips a statement of his faith and wishes, the Saviour invites him to become his pupil and personal attendant. And Matthew arose, and left all, and followed him. We can but little imagine what his feelings must have been in that most eventful moment of his life. We can, however, most clearly see that this great

step was taken from no worldly or selfish motive. For what was that Jesus to whom Matthew had now joined himself? He was without friends, without wealth, without home, without even a place where to lay his head. Matthew must have known that scorn and persecution would be the inevitable lot of all who should uphold the claims of the carpenter's son of Nazareth to be the long-expected Messiah, and that, in a worldly point of view, to relinquish for this lot his safe and doubtless lucrative publican's office, hateful though that was, would be but a poor exchange. There could have been, therefore, but one motive in Matthew's heart to lead to the great step in his life which he now proposed to take, and that motive was a sincere purpose to follow Him, however despised among men, who spake in his Father's name. Had it not been for that feeling in his heart, those few words, even from the Saviour's lips, "*Follow thou me,*" would have fallen unheeded upon his ears. And so all invitations that now come to us, however affectionate and urgent they may be, will seem only like idle words, if we do not keep alive a tender feeling to which these may make appeal.

From this time forth Matthew abandons entirely his former business, and follows Jesus. He makes the act of doing this public; for on the day succeeding his call he prepares a supper at his house, to which he invites his new Master, and many publicans, his former associates. It was at this supper that many hypocritical Pharisees, passing by, exclaimed, "Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?" — Matthew ix. 11. They thought it was a strange and scandalous thing that one who set up as the Messiah of Israel, and the purifier of its ordinances, should take a publican to be a pupil, and should break bread — that greatest token of familiarity — with other publicans and

sinners. And it was here that our Saviour made that ever-memorable reply, Matthew ix. 12, which has been well paraphrased in the following words: — “The religion which I came to teach embraces in its pure mercy the whole family of man; it draws no impassable line between the privileged and the profane; it leaves none to despair of Heaven’s favor and acceptance; — if ye are perfect, if ye are whole, my errand is not to you; go; go to your temple, and perform your rites; but when there, study the meaning of that Scripture, ‘I will have mercy and not sacrifice.’ As for these, they are sick; they need a physician, and I must heal them; ye yourselves say that they are sinners, and why shall I not call them to repentance, and save them? ”

Matthew says that all this was done “in the house” (Matt. ix. 10), without once intimating to whose house he referred. We learn from the other Gospels (Mark ii. 15, Luke v. 29), that it was in his own house that this feast was made and this conversation held. The humble publican had no desire to speak of himself, and it is remarkable that in his whole narrative he makes not the slightest allusion to himself, and even his name is but once mentioned. He records his own name in his catalogue of disciples (Matt. x. 2), and here he puts himself down as the eighth in the list, styling himself “Matthew the publican.” Even in this we have an intimation of his character. Here was a proof of his humility and good-sense. Long after he had abandoned that despised calling, and had become a distinguished and honored man, he had no disposition to forget the station he had once held, nor was he ashamed to make it known. He cared not for the contempt which the confession might bring upon him. “He had the wisdom to perceive that there was no rank or occupation in life, however low, which could change the nature of true worth, or really disgrace an honest and virtuous man.”

In all our Saviour's journeys, in all the scenes of his miracles, trials, sufferings, and death, we know not what particular part Matthew bore. We only know that he was a perpetual eyewitness and constant pupil. In that little band of disciples he seems never to have put himself forward, and never to have committed errors like those which brought remorse to the hearts of some of his brethren. He is never represented as taking part in conversations between the Saviour and his disciples, but maintains throughout the character of an humble, docile, and attentive learner.

The next notice we have of Matthew is after his Master had finished the great work of his mission, when the disciples, according to the last request of their Saviour, came together at Jerusalem. Matthew's name is expressly mentioned. Acts i. 13. Here he lived and taught, with his brethren, repeating to thousands of converts the same story of the life and words of Christ. In the persecutions that followed, when all the disciples were driven from Jerusalem, and were scattered abroad, it is not known to what place Matthew fled. Wherever he was, we may be sure he was employed, as were the other disciples, in preaching the glad news of the kingdom from city to city, and from house to house. In this work many years were diligently, but quietly, passed. Our next notice of him is about thirty years after the ascension of Christ, when we hear of him as having returned to the city of Jerusalem. It was here that he probably wrote out the Gospel which has always borne his name. After this, it is said that he travelled as a missionary into Parthia and Ethiopia, and that at Naddaber, a town in the latter country, he suffered a violent death rather than renounce his faith and hope in the Gospel of Christ. Thus, in the glorious company of the Apostles while living, he joined the noble army of the martyrs when dead.

CHAPTER VII.

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW.

FROM Matthew's life our attention is now to be directed to Matthew's Gospel. It was written, as has been said, at Jerusalem, and for the use of the churches in Judea. As a composition, it perfectly corresponds to what we have seen to be the character of its author. We see at once, upon reading this narrative, that the writer must have been a Jew, familiar with the opinions, ceremonies, and customs of his countrymen, conversant with the Old Testament writings, and habituated to their idiom. We see equally clearly, that he must have been a man of plain sense, of little or no learning, that he wrote seriously and from conviction, that he describes as an eyewitness, and without ever entertaining the most distant thought of setting off his narrative, or of introducing himself in it. As a composition intended to be read by the Jews, it is noticeable at once that this Gospel has less of those descriptions of places and customs, and definitions of Jewish words and phrases, which we shall find in the other Gospels that were written to be sent to Gentiles. By Matthew's readers all these things would be familiarly known. Such descriptions, for example, as are found in Mark vii. 3, or in John ii. 18, would be wholly uncalled for in Matthew's Gospel, and accordingly they are not found therein. The very word *Jew* or *Jews*, which occurs frequently in the other Gospels, is not used in Matthew. This proper noun, so likely to be employed by one writing at a distance from that people, would naturally be exchanged for some equivalent word by a writer in Judea; and accordingly

Matthew uses the words *multitude*, *people*, &c., in its stead. Moreover, in the selection of *materials* for this Gospel, there is a manifest choice of every circumstance which might conciliate the faith of the Jews. Thus, there was no opinion relating to the Messiah with which that people were more strongly impressed than this, that he must be of the race of Abraham and of the family of David. Matthew, therefore, with great propriety, begins his narrative with the genealogy of Jesus. He shows that *he* was of the seed of Abraham, and of the house of David. The Jews would have listened to no one's claims to be the Christ until this point had been proved. So, also, that the Messiah should be born at Bethlehem of Judea was another circumstance in which the learned Jews of those times were agreed. Micah v. 2. Matt. ii. 4. His birth in that city, with some memorable circumstances attending it, Matthew took the first opportunity to record. So, also, those passages in the prophets, or other sacred writers, which either foretell any thing that should occur to the Messiah, or admit an allusive application to him, are never passed over in silence by this Apostle. To the Jews, convinced of the inspiration of their sacred writings, the fulfilment of prophecy was always a great topic of argument. To the Gentiles, on the other hand, who knew nothing of the Old Testament predictions, this argument would be of but little force. Accordingly, in the other Gospels, designed, as we shall see, to be sent among the Gentiles, this argument is hardly ever adduced. But so great a weapon as this in controversy with the Jews, Matthew has frequently employed, and has hardly suffered an opportunity for its use to be neglected.

A few instances of this reference to the Old Testament may be named. In the minds of their readers it would have added but little to the effect of Mark's or Luke's account of

Christ's parables to have added, " All these things spake Jesus, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world." But Matthew gives this reference to the Old Testament (Matt. xiii. 35), and it was greatly to his purpose to do it, because the Jews thought these words predicted the manner in which their Messiah would teach.

Both Mark and Luke have recorded the fact, that before Christ entered upon his ministry he dwelt at Nazareth. But to their Gentile readers this fact furnished no proof that he was the Messiah. To the Jews, on the other hand, this was a proof; for they were familiar with a prophecy which said, " He shall be called a Nazarene." To that prophecy, Matthew, in recording the place where Jesus dwelt, has not failed to refer (Matt. ii. 23), and he alone has referred to it.

All the Evangelists write of the great number of the sick, of the lame, the dead, the possessed, whom Jesus restored with a word. That he wrought miracles was a proof of his divine mission to all alike, Gentiles and Jews; but that he wrought this particular class of miracles was a good argument in the mouth of Matthew alone, for his readers alone knew of the prophecy, " Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses," and this prophecy Matthew alone records. Matt. viii. 17.

At the crucifixion of Christ his garments were divided among the soldiers by lot. This all the Evangelists have related. It is Matthew alone who has added, " That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots." Matt. xxvii. 35.

The more the peculiarities of each Gospel are studied, the more shall we be convinced that each of the writers

drew up his own independent account. They could not have copied one from the other. Nor did their living and teaching together for so long a time destroy their individuality, and make one servilely repeat the other. When they sat down to write out their narratives, each one wrote freely, from his own independent remembrances, and with reference to the independent object which he had in view. And the adaptation of each Gospel to the particular object for which it was written is a proof of the great care which each bestowed upon its composition. Written with the utmost freedom and simplicity, still the Gospels were not written hastily nor carelessly. Their writers' hearts were too much in their work to permit that. Matthew no doubt felt tenderly for his brethren in the Jewish faith. The above are but a few instances where he betrays his affectionate solicitude to notice every circumstance that would operate to persuade them to admit the claims of Jesus to be their Christ.

But this did not lead him into an error of another kind. He was liable to the temptation of withholding altogether disagreeable truths, or, at least, of apologizing for them and softening them down. There is not the slightest trace of any yielding to this. When he comes to record facts disagreeable to the Jews, he does it with the utmost plainness and fearlessness. Thus, take the case of those terrible dooms which Jesus with such awful solemnity pronounced against the Scribes and Pharisees, the cities of Chorazin and Bethsaida, and even the Holy City, Jerusalem itself. Luke, writing to his Gentile friend Theophilus, very briefly repeats them as a part of the words of Christ; while Mark, thinking, doubtless, that they were intended for the Jews alone, and that they formed no part of that Gospel which was to be preached to all nations, has omitted them altogether. There may have been another reason which influenced this latter

Evangelist. At Rome, where Mark wrote, there was a disposition already too prevalent to insult and oppress the Jews, which Mark's repetition of these fearful denunciations might have needlessly increased. But Matthew has given them, every one of them, at length, and with the utmost distinctness and solemnity. Those awful decrees, uttered for *Jewish* ears, and intended for *their* warning, we all see that it was in Matthew's Gospel that they properly belonged, and there we find they are. It was not for the plain and fearless publican to shrink from making them known. It would have been no proof of a true affection to his brethren to have smoothed these things over. Their case required great plainness of speech, that they might be prepared for events, which, by all his confidence in Christ, he knew would come, and which, in fact, did come only a few years after he had written his Gospel. To be able to utter, with calmness and decision, truths which we know will provoke scorn and opposition, is one great mark of moral courage; and this virtue we must ascribe to Matthew.

Another peculiarity of this Gospel is, that it is the only one which was written in the very language which the Saviour used. The other Gospels were written in Greek, which was then a kind of universal language, as the French is now. Mark, Luke, and John, writing in this language, placed their histories within the reach of a much larger number of readers than if they had made use of any other tongue. But Matthew wrote for the Jews alone, and he wrote in their own language, the Hebrew. They understood the Greek, but this was the language that they loved. In the life of Paul, we read that on one occasion, when surrounded by a riotous multitude, they were stilled at once, and listened to him readily, when they perceived that he addressed them in the Hebrew tongue. And this is the language which the

Saviour used. We are reminded of this several times, by an occasional retention, in each of the Gospels, of a few original Hebrew words. Thus, when Jesus raised to life a young woman, he approached the bed where she lay, and said, *Talitha cumi*, which is to say, Damsel, I say unto thee arise. Mark v. 41. Again, when a man was brought to him who had an impediment in his speech, Jesus took up clay and touched his tongue, and, looking up to heaven, he said, *Ephphatha*, that is, Be opened. Mark vii. 34.

It at first seems unaccountable why the Evangelists should retain here the precise words of Christ. "They are not singular words. They are among the simplest, and admit without the least difficulty of being translated. Nay, they are translated in the very next breath. How shall we account for this curious feature in the narrative? It admits" — as it has been ingeniously suggested by Mr. Furness, in his Remarks on the Four Gospels, from which this quotation is made — "of an explanation which is wonderfully natural. Imagine the utterance of these simple words to have been instantly followed by the effects which they are said to have produced, namely, the restoration of the girl to life in the one case, and the recovery of the powers of hearing and speech in the deaf and dumb man in the other, and we perceive what stupendous power must have instantaneously passed, in the minds of those present, into those brief articulate sounds that issued from the lips of Jesus, and the utterance of which seemed naturally enough to be the cause of the astonishing effects produced. What peculiar, supernatural, and untranslatable significance must these words have instantly been thought to possess, which wrought or appeared to work so mightily! In the minds of the bystanders, those few sounds were instantly divorced, as by a stroke of lightning, from all familiar associations. Their

ordinary import was lost in the new, instant, and unheard-of power which their utterance revealed. They no longer had any satisfactory correspondence with the articulations of any other language. No other forms of speech were felt to convey the same miraculous meaning, to possess the like force"; and when, years after, the Apostles sat down to recall and record those scenes, with what power of inexpressible associations did these very words press into their minds! What an impress of nature and reality do these mystic words impart to the narrative!

These remarks apply also to the Saviour's exclamation on the cross, *Eli, Eli, lama sabacthani?* that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Matt. xxvii. 46. No other words from mortal lips could express the associations which in the Apostles' minds were for ever linked to these words.

The Gospel of Matthew possesses peculiar interest, because it was at first drawn up entirely in the language which that Teacher uttered, who could attach such wonderful power to his words. It is true that the Gospel in that language has been lost. The most ancient form in which we now possess it is a translation into Greek, made soon after the original was composed. But there is no reason to doubt its exact faithfulness to the original. It was at once received by those who, reading familiarly both languages, would detect the slightest variation between the original and the translation. Though, then, we may be allowed to regret that we cannot look on the very words which this Apostle used in narrating the life and words of his Master, yet our faith need not be in the least disturbed by the loss, while there remains for us this translation of his history, so manifestly ancient, complete, and true.

One other circumstance, which gives peculiar value to the

Gospel of Matthew, may be named, and this is the remarkably clear and forcible style in which it is composed. Those who have much studied the peculiarities of the Evangelical narratives tell us that they could at once detect a paragraph of Matthew's history, if it were inserted in either of the other narratives. But it does not need any rare critical examination to appreciate the style of this writer. Let any one compare together Luke's and Matthew's record of the sermon on the mount, for example, and it will be at once seen how much superior in conciseness and energy is the latter. How observable especially is this in the manner in which each gives the beatitudes ! Matt. v. 3 - 12, compared with Luke vi. 20 - 23.

The same simplicity and power of expression are found in the account Matthew gives of Christ's charge to his Apostles, his illustrations of the nature of his kingdom, and his replies to the cavils of his adversaries. It is for this reason that Matthew's Gospel has always been most highly esteemed, and has always been placed first in manuscript and printed collections.

We never feel more profoundly that our Gospel histories are true, than when we thus make a comparison, one with the other, to learn the object and peculiarities of each. The external evidence of their genuineness, that of manuscripts, and history, and tradition, is important ; but there are marks in the Gospels themselves of honesty and truth, which, if only reflected upon, are far more convincing and satisfactory. There is a certain way of telling a story which belongs only to truth, and which, when perceived, carries with it all power of determining the understanding and touching the heart. But this way is perceived only by him who has sympathies with the truth, a free, open, and generous heart, that will discern it and bid it welcome. That famous

aphorism of the Fathers, that all Scripture must be interpreted by the same spirit in which it was written, covers a great principle. We see it illustrated every day. To the coarse and uncultivated, what a mystery are the pleasures of a refined taste ! to the selfish, how unintelligible are the impulses of generosity ! how can the depraved and earthly conceive of the joys of devotion ! One great reason why we are affected no more by the perusal of our Gospel histories is, that we have so little of that single-minded and all-devoted spirit in which they were written. Their authors had become like little children, in meekness, simplicity, reverence, and faith. Just in the proportion that we receive these virtues in our hearts shall we see in their writings signatures of honesty, sincerity, and reality, which we cannot resist, and which will draw us to Him in whom all treasures of wisdom are hid.

CHAPTER VIII.

NOTICES OF THE LIFE OF MARK.

IN the twelfth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, at the twelfth verse, we read these words :—“ And Peter came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark ; where many were gathered together, praying.” This is the first notice of Mark which we find in the Scriptures. We are here introduced to him in connection with an interesting incident in the life of that Apostle, with whom Mark afterwards long lived, and from whom he received the materials of the narrative which bears his name. Let us see what that incident was.

The family and friends of Mary had been filled with grief and fear, and they had come together to obtain the comfort and strength of prayer. The Apostle Peter, whom they had long known, honored, and loved, had been arrested by order of Herod, and had been thrown into prison, with the intention that he should soon be given up to be destroyed by the Jews. On the very night before he was to have been brought forth, he was found *sleeping* between two soldiers,—such is the tranquillity of an upright heart even in extreme danger. The account of his deliverance is given in Acts xii. 7; and we will observe to what place Peter, when freed, immediately directed his steps. He repaired at once to the house where a group of friends were offering their prayers to God for his release.

It is a circumstance which gives a great air of truth and reality to our Gospel histories, not only that individual characters are so well preserved,—such as the affectionate temper of John, the impetuous spirit of Peter,—but that we are occasionally presented with little groups of relatives and friends, who in those days, when all were exposed to persecution, would be so naturally drawn together. Thus the family of Lazarus, with his sisters Mary and Martha and their friends, forms one group, which with singular distinctness is presented before us. Then the women, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Salome the wife of Zebedee, who attended the crucifixion, prepared spices to embalm the body, and were so early at the tomb after the ascension of Christ, form another group that was brought naturally and frequently together. Peter's house at Capharnaum was a place where another like group of believers used to assemble, and there they had been sometimes favored with the presence and teachings of Christ.

Just such a place of assembling was this house of Mark's

mother, to which the released Apostle now approached. During his long residence in Jerusalem he had often been there, to instruct this family and their friends; and when they had heard of his arrest, they naturally came together, to sympathize with his fate, and to pray for his deliverance. And their prayer had been heard. So well was Peter known by them, that, when he stood at the door and knocked, his voice was at once recognized, and, as soon as their astonishment permitted them to attend to his words, he declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of prison.

This, then, was the home of Mark, an inhabitant of Jerusalem, born and educated a Jew. He was not one of the twelve, nor a personal companion of Christ. At what time he embraced the new religion is not known, probably not until after the ascension of Christ. He was converted by Peter, who calls him his *son* (1 Peter v. 13),—a title which in those times was commonly given by the minister to every one who through him had been converted to the Christian faith. Doubtless this laid the foundation for that intimacy which we shall see always existed between the Apostle and his pupil.

Soon after Peter's release from prison, Mark determines to accompany Barnabas, who was his mother's brother, and Saul, in their journeys to preach the Gospel. It was at this time that he first took the surname of Mark, having been known before by the name of John. It was a practice with the Jews to assume names more familiar to the nations they visited than those by which they were known in their own country. Antioch was the first place to which Saul and Barnabas repaired, and from thence they were sent by the churches to Paphos, in the isle of Cyprus, and to Perga, in Pamphylia. Here Mark leaves these Apostles, and returns to his mother's house at Jerusalem. For what reason this

step was taken, we have not been informed. It gave offence to Paul ; for a few years after this, when he and Barnabas proposed another journey to visit and confirm the churches, and the latter was determined to take his nephew Mark with him, Paul, as we read in Acts xv. 38, "thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them at Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other," Barnabas taking Mark and sailing to Cyprus, while Paul, with Silas for a companion, departed through Syria and Cilicia.

How instructive is this account of the sharp contention, or *paroxysm*, as it is in the original, between these two distinguished disciples ! We can imagine many reasons which induced Mark to return to his widowed mother at Jerusalem, reasons in themselves strong and satisfactory, which his mother's brother, Barnabas, would appreciate, but which, at the same time, might seem insufficient to one like Paul. He feared that Mark, if again employed, might desert them again ; Barnabas, it is probable, knew that the causes which before called Mark home would not again exist ; how natural, then, that this dispute, with men of such temperament as Paul and Barnabas, should wax warm, and lead to their separation ! It proves that they were men,—just such men as we see now ; and that their inspiration left them free to consult their own judgments, and to follow their own wills. It proves something more important still. The Gospel history, which they told from place to place, was no contrivance of theirs, which, as soon as they were vexed with one another and had separated, one of them would expose and renounce. When men plot some schemae of private interest or ambition, to impose upon the credulity of mankind under the cover of zeal for the public good, any contention or separation proves

fatal to their undertaking, reveals their secret, and betrays their wicked design. Nothing like this occurred here, because nothing of a secret or private nature entered into the views of these men. When in their anger they separate, they go everywhere telling the same story, and teaching the same truths ; and thus we gain new evidence of the truth of the Gospel history even from the imperfections of its first teachers. Nor is this all. They not only prove it to be true historically, but they prove the influence its truth had upon their own hearts. Barnabas and Paul were men, and they separated in anger ; but they were Christians, too, and they cherished no resentment. Paul had the magnanimity to retract his opinion, and to acknowledge his mistake in regard to the character of Mark. Not long after this dispute, we find that Paul had Mark with him as an esteemed fellow-laborer, and when again they were separated, the Apostle sends express word to Timothy, " Bring Mark with thee, for he is profitable to me for the ministry." — 2 Timothy iv. 11. Differences of opinion will often rise among men, and good men are not exempt from the weakness of advocating their own views with excess of positiveness and warmth. To cherish no resentment, to review one's opinion, and to acknowledge an error or mistake,— this is the Christian part, which the Apostles not only enjoined upon others, but acted themselves.

We must return to the life of Mark. His stay at Cyprus was not long. Barnabas, it is said, was soon stoned to death by the Jews residing on that corrupt and licentious island, and thus added another name to the great number of those who counted not their lives dear unto them for the sake of the Gospel of Christ. Mark, thus deprived of his companion and guide, sought out at once the Apostle Peter, the long and intimate friend of his family, his spiritual father, who

better than any one else could further teach him the words of light and life. That Apostle, as is supposed, then dwelt at Antioch. Mark joins him there, and from this time remains with him, his constant attendant and assistant, we know not exactly how long, but probably for eight or ten years. The churches which Peter had especially under his care were those in Antioch, Pontus, Cappadocia, and Bithynia; and as the Christian history speaks of Mark as a fellow-traveller with Peter, they doubtless visited together these congregations of believers. After this we hear of Mark in Rome, for his name is affectionately mentioned at the conclusion of the epistles written from that city by Paul. Col. iv. 10. 2 Timothy iv. 11. Philemon 24.

It is the unanimous testimony of ancient writers, that Mark was entreated by the Christians of Rome to commit to writing what he had learned from Peter of the life and words of Christ. This was the occasion of the composition of his Gospel. When it was written, Mark travelled to Alexandria in Egypt, where he was the first to preach the new religion, and where he established a church. Here he soon died, and was buried.

Thus was secured another independent record of the life of Christ, from materials furnished by an eyewitness, and one of the most distinguished followers of the Saviour. Had it not been written then and there by Mark, Peter's independent and important testimony would not have been written at all. For this Apostle himself lived but a short time after Mark had been separated from him. In the eighth year of the cruel reign of Nero, both Peter and Paul were crucified, and thus they placed to the testimony they gave the seal of their blood. It is said, that, out of a feeling of humble respect for his Master, Peter requested to be crucified with his head downwards. "If so, it is an affect-

ing conclusion of his eventful life, and another striking exhibition of the ardent character which adhered to him to the last. He conceived it too great an honor that such an one as he should meet his death erect, and looking upwards, like his beloved and venerated Lord ; and so, with his head in the dust, he closed his labors, his failings, his victories, his sufferings, and his life."

These occasional notices of Peter's life seem to have been called for in connection with that of Mark, because the Gospel of Mark comes to us on the authority of Peter. . For this reason, it has sometimes been called the Petrine Gospel ; but, as it was written by his companion and pupil, the title which it has always borne in our Bibles is evidently the proper one.

CHAPTER IX.

THE GOSPEL OF MARK.

FROM all we know of Mark, it is very evident that both he and his family occupied a humble position in society. In all his journeys with Barnabas and Paul, and with Peter, he is named only as *their* minister,—as high a station, doubtless, as he desired, or for which his education qualified him. Now with all this his Gospel remarkably corresponds. Its language is more like the language of an uneducated man than that of any other writing which the New Testament contains. It is less copious, more harsh, more abounding in expressions that are unusual and barbarous to the tongue. He describes clearly ; we have no difficulty in understanding

his meaning ; but every thing is narrated with great brevity, and with a baldness and awkwardness of expression which will be seen on comparing his narrative with that of Matthew or Luke.

Another peculiarity of this Gospel is, that, although written in Greek, and written, too, by one who in every chapter proves himself a Jew, we still find Roman, that is Latin, names and words, which occur in no other Gospel, and which sound oddly in the midst of words of a different tongue. Thus the other Evangelists, in writing of the title *centurion*, captain of a hundred men, make use of the common Greek word that denoted that office. Mark, on the other hand (xv. 19), designates it by the word by which it was always called among the Romans. The mere English reader will not perceive the difference, which is seen at once in the original. So, in Mark xii. 42, the value of the sum which the poor widow cast into the treasury is expressed by naming a Roman coin. Again, in Mark vii. 4, which contains an account of the Jewish ceremony of washing hands before meat, to the vessel made use of for this purpose Mark gives not the common name applied to it by the Jews, but one more familiarly known by the Romans. If in using these words Mark had no design to make himself better understood by those for whose benefit he was writing, we all know how unconsciously just such words as the above, if they have been recently used, will at once occur to the memory of the speaker or writer, even though using for the moment a different tongue.

A more remarkable peculiarity of this Gospel may be found in the frequent explanations of places and customs which Mark introduces, in order to be better understood by his readers at Rome. Thus, when he has occasion to mention the Jordan (Mark i. 5), he prefixes the explanation *the river*,

an explanation needed only in a distant country. The word translated *hell* in our New Testaments is literally the name of a place near Jerusalem, the valley of Hinnom, where infants had been sacrificed by fire to Moloch; a place well known to the inhabitants of Judea, but of which the Romans were ignorant. Accordingly, Mark, when he mentions it, adds, *the fire that never shall be quenched.* Mark ix. 43, 45. The Jews applied the word *corban* to property which any man set apart to the exclusive service of God. Ungrateful and impious children, who had aged and infirm parents, would make *corban* of their property, and thus avoid their support. The Saviour reproved them for thus making null the commandments of God through their tradition. In giving an account of this, Mark uses the word *corban*, but he fails not to define it,—a gift to the Lord of that by which thou mightest have been profited by me,—without which explanation to his readers, this reproof of the Saviour would be entirely misunderstood. Mark vii. 11. In the second verse of that same chapter, the phrase “*defiled hands*” would probably have suggested to Roman ears some offence more heinous than neglect of a superstitious washing, had not Mark taken pains so to define it. Two remarkable verses follow, in these words:—“For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups and pots, and brazen vessels, and of tables.”

That Mark was writing for the benefit of other than Jewish readers must be obvious from this example alone. But there is another remark to be made in respect to the foregoing quotation. So much of mere comment and explanation,

from the writer is nowhere else to be found in the Gospels. This single fact is a proof how little these writers ever speak in their own names. They always retire behind the facts they record, anxious that you should look at these alone. It is this circumstance which makes this long comment of Mark noticeable ; and at first we may wonder why he should have put it forward. But when we read on a little farther, what do we find ? That Mark immediately gives the long sermon of Christ, in which he shows that there is but one thing that can truly defile a man, namely, his own evil heart. A moment's study of the passage leads us to see that the whole force of this sermon depends upon a knowledge of this Jewish custom, which was the text and explanation of the discourse. The Saviour's doctrine would not have been comprehended, if the contrast which he draws between ceremonial washing and inward purity had not been preserved. This instance, requiring him to step so far aside from his usual way of narration, is a striking one of Mark's great care to adapt his Gospel to the comprehension of those for whose benefit it was composed.

We see the same care, also, in the selection of the materials for his Gospel. Mark, doubtless, had knowledge, through the Apostle Peter, of all the important events in the life of Christ. But many facts which we find in Matthew are wholly omitted in Mark. The reason is, he knew they would be of less consequence to his readers at Rome. Of this character were the genealogy of Christ, notices of his parents, the time and circumstances of his birth, of the very place of which — the little town of Bethlehem — probably the most of these at Rome had never heard. All these particulars Mark properly passes by. For the same reason is another fact, before noticed, that Mark gives us in a few words the discourses against the Scribes and Pharisees.

There is one other observation respecting Mark's Gospel, which suggests a peculiarly interesting light in which to survey it. If it was composed of materials furnished to Mark by Peter, we shall naturally expect to find *Peter* in it, that is to say, traces of his independent knowledge and of his peculiar character.

Such traces are found. We shall be able to notice only a few of the many particulars upon which the testimony of Peter in this Gospel throws a new and important light. The conduct of our Saviour, when he was told that his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him, appears singular and unnatural in Matthew's account of it. Matt. xii. 48. The Saviour gave no attention to their request, and does not appear to have noticed them. In Mark, a circumstance unrecorded by the other writers is added, which explains and justifies the course which Jesus took. We are here told, that "his kinsmen went out to lay hold on him ; for they said, He is beside himself." Mark iii. 21. Jesus, therefore, knew what they wanted of him, and would not permit their false view to interrupt him.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke record, that, as Jesus was going to be crucified, the soldiers compelled one Simon, a Cyrenean, to bear the cross. In Mark's Gospel alone we read that this Simon was the father of Alexander and Rufus. Mark xv. 21. Why should Mark have added this fact ? Because, as we incidentally learn from the Epistle to the Romans, Rufus was then living in Rome. Romans xvi. 13. That the Saviour's cross was borne by the father of one then living in that city was a fact interesting to Mark's readers, and to his alone. It is probable that Peter, in narrating the crucifixion of his Master to his Roman hearers, often referred to this Rufus, then living among them, as one who could testify that his own father was a witness and an unwilling

a better of that awful scene. A man, conscious that every word he uttered could be confirmed, would naturally make such an appeal as this to a present witness ; and here is an instance of a coincidence between the Gospels and the Epistles, which must have been undesigned, and which, as we should acknowledge were we legally examining these documents, casts a convincing light on the question of their authenticity.

We find, also, in this Gospel, traces of Peter's peculiar character. This Apostle was one of the most distinguished companions of Christ, who was at times both commended and severely reproofed by his Master. In giving an account to Mark of the life and words of Jesus, Peter must often speak of himself, and a man will betray his character by the manner in which he does this. What accounts, then, of Peter do we find in this Gospel of Mark ? Precisely the same accounts that we find in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. It is the same Peter in all ; the same bold, over-confident, impulsive, denying, yet quickly repentant and deeply affectionate disciple. The facts stand in all their bald simplicity in this Gospel, just as they stand in the others. Peter puts in not one word of explanation, not one whisper of apology or palliation. In relation to that event which was so full of unmitigated grief and remorse, the denial of his Master, it is Peter's own account of it that makes us most deeply feel its folly and its guilt. The circumstances that preceded it, the prediction of Jesus that Peter would forsake him, and the solemn assurance of the Apostle that he would not, are related with more distinctness and impressiveness in Mark's Gospel than in either of the others. The reason how natural ! Those were words which sunk deep into Peter's heart, which he never forgot, and which, though they told such an awful tale against him, it was not for him to suppress.

Generous and devoted disciple! With all the weaknesses and sins into which he was betrayed, who of us does not love him? How can we lay up any thing against any human being, however erring and sinful, who, only by a *look* of reproof, is made to go out and weep bitterly?

While, then, Peter keeps not back an account of that bitter rebuke, does it appear that he was equally forward to make mention of the praise which he received from his Master's lips? Here, too, we have an indication of character both beautiful and delicate. You remember those emphatic words of Jesus, pronouncing Peter blessed, declaring him to be the rock of the church, and to possess the keys of heaven. You remember it was supposed that these words conferred some preëminence upon Peter, and that therefore they created offence in the little band of equal disciples. You will find these words in the Gospel of Matthew. Matt. xvi. 17–19. They are not found in the Gospel of Mark. The occasion on which they were uttered is named, and other conversation which was then held is narrated. Mark viii. 27–29. The words of praise are not repeated; and yet could Peter have forgotten them?

Thus, in reading our four Gospel histories, there is hardly any thing with which we may be more deeply impressed, than with the fact that their writers must have been themselves influenced by the doctrines which they taught. These doctrines, the veriest infidel allows, are adapted to make men love honesty, sincerity, and truth. So far, then, as we see that they had effect upon those who taught them, so far must we also see the moral impossibility that these men could all the while be engaged in a dark work of forgeries and lies. Who is credulous enough to believe that? By all that their Master taught them they were made humble, forgetful of themselves, indifferent to the world's favor or

reproach, in love only with the truth; they were holy men, and could not speak otherwise than as they were moved by the spirit of sincerity and truth.

CHAPTER X.

NOTICES OF THE LIFE OF LUKE.

THESE are but few, and for the most part unsatisfactory. The author of two important books, the Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles, Luke had the self-forgetfulness so characteristic of the first disciples, who did not deem any thing relating to their own history worthy the slightest notice in connection with Him whose life and words they were called to record. Luke has never, in either of his histories, mentioned himself by name. In giving an account of Paul's labors and travels, whose companion and assistant Luke was, he yet says no more of the part which he acted than such expressions as these imply:—"we journeyed," "we sailed," "we abode." Paul, in his epistles, makes occasional allusion to Luke by name, and from these sources, and from what we learn from credible historians, almost contemporaneous, we gather the materials for the following sketch.

He was born in Antioch, about fifteen years before the birth of Christ. Of the converts made to the new religion in the age of the Apostles, he was the oldest of whom we have any account. Antioch was at this time one of the most celebrated cities of the East, the capital of Syria, and the residence of the Roman governors. Here all religions were tolerated, and the population was composed of Greeks, Ro-

mans, Macedonians, and Jews. Luke was born, it is probable, of Gentile parents. Paul, in his Epistle to the Colossians (iv. 14), implies that he was not of the circumcision, as he gives his name after the names of those whose Jewish descent is expressly affirmed. See Col. iv. 7–11. He doubtless received a Gentile education, and was trained up to the profession of a physician. He was, therefore, a man of some learning. Those who followed this profession received more instruction than most men, both in their particular art and in general literature. They obtained, besides, that practical knowledge which may be acquired by an extensive intercourse with society. These qualifications were not of a low order, it is likely, in a city so learned as that of Luke's birthplace, where the Greek language in its purity had long prevailed, and letters had long been cultivated, and where people of the first distinction resided. At what time Luke was made a convert to the Jewish religion is not known. It is probable he became such early in life, as throughout his Gospel and the Acts he shows the utmost familiarity with its doctrines and ceremonies, with the language of its sacred books, and with places and customs of Judea.

Here, then, at Antioch, Luke lived, as is supposed, until he was about fifty years of age, discharging the duties of his profession, and enjoying his religion as a proselyte Jew. Meantime all the events had been transpiring, in the neighbouring province of Judea, of which we read in the Gospels,—the birth of the Saviour, his baptism, his ministry, his wonderful works, his arrest, trial, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension; and how worthy of our notice is it that God should now raise up, in this enlightened city of Antioch, another historian of all these facts, in the person of such a man as Luke,—a man of age and attainments, whose character was well formed and was probably well known!

Of the time and manner in which Luke first became acquainted with the Gospel, we have not been informed. We know clearly only what he has told us in the preface to his Gospel, that he was not an eyewitness of the events of the Saviour's life, but obtained a knowledge of them from those who were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word; and also what we learn from the Acts, that, soon after Paul's conversion, Luke joined that Apostle, as his companion and assistant. It seems probable that Luke was converted to the Christian faith on the day of Pentecost. This was an occasion, when, as a Jewish believer, he would naturally be present at Jerusalem; and what more probable than that he was one of the great number of devout persons, out of every nation, who had then come together in that city? Here, convinced by the miracles which on that day converted three thousand to the Christian faith, he made this the subject of his careful inquiry, and availed himself of all opportunities to hear the preachers of the new religion. During the years they spent in Jerusalem, Luke lived with them, as we have reason to conclude, and took part himself in their work of repeating to others the story of the life and words of Christ. Thus we see the sources of his information, and how his narrative also became influenced by the style of the Apostle's oral accounts.

We now pass several years down the course of events. The Apostles had fulfilled their ministry in Jerusalem, according to His word who told them to tarry for a time in that city, their number had been greatly enlarged, and that bold and able advocate, Paul of Tarsus, had been raised up to their cause. The martyrdom of Stephen and the imprisonment of Peter were soon followed by days of persecution, that separated the Apostles and early preachers from one another, and sent them everywhere abroad as mission-

aries of the new faith. In this dispersion Paul went to Antioch, to which place Luke had before repaired. Here the acquaintance between the Apostle and Evangelist probably commenced. Here Paul established a church, of which Luke was, doubtless, a prominent member. It was in this city, also, and at this time, that the disciples were first called Christians. *Acts xi. 26.*

Not long after this, we find that Luke has determined to devote himself to the work of spreading a knowledge of these glad tidings abroad in the world. What the young disciple Mark did when he connected himself with Peter, what Matthew the publican did when the Saviour met him at the receipt of custom, this the older and more experienced Luke now does,—he leaves all to follow the call of Christ. So strong was the sense of duty in the hearts of these men! They broke away from every attachment of kindred and country and habit and home, that they might everywhere bear witness to what they knew was for the healing and salvation of the world. In the case of Luke, this is particularly remarkable. He had now reached a period in life when men oftener think of retiring from its cares, than of turning their feet to a new and perilous pursuit. The fervors of youth had passed away, and all his tastes and attachments must have confined him, in his declining years, to the city where he was born, and where for so long a time he had followed the duties of his profession. But all these he now overcomes, and joins himself, as a companion and fellow-laborer, to the Apostle Paul.

We have before seen how natural it was that Peter and Mark should unite together in their labors as missionaries and preachers of the word. They both sprang from the same humble station in life, they had for a long time been previously acquainted with one another, they had sustained

to each other the relation of teacher and pupil. Equally natural was it that two such men as Paul and Luke should unite together as companions and fellow-laborers. The former was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, and was learned in the wisdom of the ancients, and in the sacred books of the Jews ; the latter, likewise, from education, profession, and the intercourse of his whole life with intelligent society, was a man of considerable attainments, accustomed to close examination and careful thought. Among all the early converts to the new religion, we know of no other one like these two men. How natural, then, that they should labor together, to bear one another's burdens and to help one another's joys !

Luke was with Paul, more or less, for many years. The account of their journeys, preachings, and many trials, he has recorded in the book of the Acts. It is evidence of the great minuteness and exactness with which he has done this, that, with a common ancient map before us, we can trace the course of their voyages, see the islands at which they touched, and the places where they preached. In all these perils and labors, what particular part Luke himself bore we can only conjecture. It is noticeable that Paul does not call Luke his minister, as he did Mark. Luke was a fellow-laborer, an equal, the beloved physician,—one on whose wisdom and experience Paul leaned for support. Paul was younger, more active, a more gifted, and a more remarkable man, whose education, habits, wonderful conversion, and bold temperament qualified him to be prominent in action and address. Such he appears throughout the narrative ; it is of what Paul said, and did, and suffered, that Luke chiefly speaks. Luke himself was declining in years, from the habits of his profession he was unused to public harangues, and although in his modesty he has hardly said a word of

himself, we know at least this much, that he minutely observed and carefully recorded every thing that came under his notice, that he was Paul's judicious, confidential counsellor, and steady and supporting friend.

With the imprisonment of Paul at Rome, the history in the book of Acts concludes. Here, also, terminate Luke's incidental notices of his own life. The most credible account which has been handed down of the remaining part of the life of this Evangelist leads us to conclude that he soon left Rome and settled in Greece. It is said that he here wrote his Gospel and the Acts, and soon after died, at the venerable age of eighty-four.

CHAPTER XI.

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE.

FROM these brief notices of the life of Luke, we are now to turn to the Gospel which bears his name. We are struck at once with the manner in which he begins his narrative, it is so different from that of the other Evangelists. Accordinging to the taste of the Greeks and Romans, which he doubtless acquired in his Gentile education, he opens his history with a preface, from which we learn his intentions in writing, the sources of his knowledge, and the name of the person for whose benefit the work was undertaken. It is a long, carefully written, and well-balanced sentence, of pure and well-chosen words. How would it have sounded, had it been placed at the beginning of the narrative of Matthew or of Mark ! Neither of them appears to have given a thought

to the selection of language, or to have cared any thing for style. Luke's preface is appropriate to no place but to that where it is. Here it is in perfect keeping with the man.

The title "most excellent" was bestowed upon those who held offices of considerable importance under the Roman emperors, such offices as superintendents of sacred edifices, overseers of public revenue, deputy governors in the provinces; and as Luke gives geographical notices of places not in the neighbourhood of Greece, it is probable that Theophilus resided in that country, and was some distinguished man converted and instructed by Luke, when he went there to spend the few last years of his old age. The following are references, in Luke's Gospel, to descriptions which would have been unnecessary had he been writing to one well acquainted with Judea: i. 26; iv. 31; viii. 26; xxiii. 51; xxiv. 13. So, too, in the Acts, we find that places in Judea and in Asia Minor are named as if they were less known than those in Greece and those between Greece and Rome, with which a public officer of Greece would naturally be acquainted. These facts sufficiently indicate the residence of Theophilus.

One other thing in this preface deserves our notice, as it throws light upon the state of feeling which then existed in regard to the Christian religion. Luke mentions, as one reason why he wrote his Gospel, that *many* had taken in hand to give account of the Saviour's life and words. Had these accounts been entirely trustworthy and satisfactory, his own labor would have been unnecessary. No doubt these were brief and contradictory relations. Of course, he does not refer to the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and John. He would not so allude to the narratives of three writers, two of whom had better opportunities of information than himself, while the other had opportunities equally as good. Besides this,

John's Gospel was not at this time written, while the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, if then composed, of which there is much reason to doubt, were published in countries remote from Greece, and were not then, it is probable, familiarly known.

There were, then, other, but imperfect, accounts of Christ's life and words, known in Greece before Luke prepared his Gospel. How natural that such accounts should have existed! Thirty years had elapsed since the events of the Saviour's life transpired in Judea. A knowledge of them must have been carried to all parts of the world by Jews and others. What could have been more natural than that brief, incorrect, and contradictory accounts of events so wonderful should have been frequently committed to writing, and that they should awaken much curiosity, and should be sought after by persons of various descriptions? The fact named by Luke is of much importance, as it shows that the Christian religion attracted the attention of mankind at the very time when its pretensions could be easily exposed if they were false. Our Gospels were not presented to the world at a time when an absolutely dead indifference prevailed as to their contents. They had acquired no sanction of age, nor had opportunities to test their authenticity passed by, before their merits were discussed. On the contrary, at the very time they were written, men were asking what might be depended upon for truth. They were composed and published for this very purpose, to distinguish and preserve what was certain and worthy of reliance. And time, that trieth all things, has consigned to oblivion those accounts of the *many*, to which the occurrence of marvellous events always gives birth, and which were doubtless written in haste and from mere rumor, while it has safely handed down to us the carefully written narratives of those who

embalmed their words in the ever-living spirit of deep sincerity and truth.

Of Luke's Gospel as a book, the most striking peculiarity is the great research which it betrays, and the surprising care, precision, and fulness of detail with which it is written. Luke tells us that he had accurately informed himself of all things from the beginning (i. 3); and that he had taken great pains to do this is evident throughout. Indeed, Luke appears to have been a man who heartily loved dates, and names, and a statement of facts. A trait of character like this rarely belongs to such men as Matthew and Mark; but how very natural to find it in the old age of a man who had long followed that profession which, more than any other, creates habits of observing and recording facts! A quotation of a verse or two from his Gospel will illustrate this trait of his character. It is found at the beginning of the third chapter. "Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip being tetrarch of Iturea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiphas being the high-priests, the word of God came unto John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness." Could any man take greater pains to insure precision and fix a date? He wishes to settle the precise time when a certain man began to preach; he tells his name, the name of his father, the neighbourhood where he first appeared, who were high-priests at the time, the name of the offices and of the officers of the three highest civil stations in the country, the name of the emperor who ruled over all, and the very year of his reign.

The same love of preciseness in recording facts is seen in the other book of this Evangelist, the Acts of the Apostles. Thus, on one occasion, he gives account of his accompany-

ing Paul, then a prisoner, on his way to Rome. Acts xxvii. 1. They sail from Tyre under the care of Julius, a centurion, belonging to the band of Augustus ; the vessel was owned at Adramyttium, and Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, was a fellow-passenger. The day after they launched, they touched at Sidon, sailed near the island of Cyprus, over the sea of Cilicia, and landed at Myra, a city of Lycia. All this is within the compass of five verses. Look at another extract from his journal. Acts xxviii. 11. They had been shipwrecked upon the island of Malta. They were obliged to remain here three months. They then obtained passage in a ship belonging to Alexandria ; her name was Castor and Pollux ; she had wintered at the isle. They soon landed at Syracuse ; here they stopped three days. They then beat their way against opposing winds to Rhegium, where they remained one day ; then, a south wind blowing, they passed on towards Rome.

This unusual minuteness in recording so many little facts, names, and places sprung from no design to accumulate evidence of the truth of his history ; still less was it an appeal, which, so often made, might have seemed vain and ostentatious, to hundreds of witnesses of his veracity, who might have then been found. Luke writes as if he never once thought that his statements would be called in question. Every thing is put down naturally, as the record of a very observing man, whose habit and delight it was to preserve all connected facts. It is true that every additional circumstance he mentions furnished to his readers a new test of his credibility, but there is nowhere the slightest indication that Luke for a moment thought of this. Impressed with the reality of every thing he relates, he betrays no consciousness that it had ever occurred to him that his narrative could appear otherwise than as simple and consistent reality to any

body. Accordingly, throughout his writings, as indeed throughout the writings of the other Evangelists, there is a quiet, unobtrusive confidence in his narrative, which could have sprung only from the profoundest conviction of its truth.

To these traits of Luke's character which have now been noticed, to his spirit of research, and love of minuteness, and precision in recording facts, we are very largely indebted. They led him to gather up and preserve many interesting particulars, of which the other Evangelists leave us uninformed. Thus the beautiful hymn of Mary before the birth of Jesus (Luke i. 46), Zacharias's song of thanksgiving when he named his son John (Luke i. 67), and the devout address of good old Simeon in the temple (Luke ii. 29), are given by Luke alone. We may suppose that these words were written out in full afterwards by these persons, as descriptive of what they felt and imperfectly expressed on the above-named occasions, and that Luke, when in Judea, obtained copies of them, and inserted them in their place near the beginning of his Gospel. Had it not been for his care, they would not have been preserved.

So, also, no one can compare the Gospels together, without at once seeing how many more parables Luke gives than any of the other Evangelists. Those simple and most beautifully wrought allegories,—that of the rich man and Lazarus, the prodigal son, the Pharisee and the publican, the good Samaritan,—are found in Luke alone. Matthew and Mark did all that the necessities of the occasions that gave rise to their Gospels required or permitted; the absence of these parables from their narratives does not surprise us. But how well does it comport with all that we know of the taste and character of Luke, that, in his journeys in Judea and conversations with the Apostles, he should

treasure up these parables with minutest care, and that when he wrote, in the leisure of his old age, he should take so much pains to record them in full ! Thus it is through him that these divine lessons have given so much delight and wisdom to the world.

To the same care of Luke in observing and recording facts, we owe a knowledge of many other particulars,—those relating to the birth of John, the occasion of Joseph's being in Bethlehem when Jesus was born, the vision granted to the shepherds who watched their flocks by night, the journey of the child Jesus when twelve years old to Jerusalem, the conversion of Zaccheus the publican, the repulse the Saviour and his disciples met when about to enter a Samaritan city, the instructive rebuke he then gave to two of his disciples for their intemperate zeal, the mission of the seventy, and the affecting interview during the walk to Emmaus. All these are recorded in the Gospel of Luke alone.

And yet it is worth our while to observe that this Evangelist, with all his minute attention to facts, sometimes makes most indefinite allusions to time and place in narrating the events of successive days in the life of Christ. Thus he has occasionally phrases like these,—“*in a certain city,*” “*at a certain village,*” “*on one of those days,*” “*at that season,*” &c., referring to times and places which are more exactly designated in the Gospel of Matthew. Compare Luke v. 12 with Matt. viii. 2; also, Luke xv. 1 with Matt. ix. 10. The obvious conclusion is, that Luke had not seen Matthew's Gospel. If he had, he would have been glad to learn the exact time and place from that Evangelist. How well does this different method of indicating the succession of events agree with what we have seen to be the origin of these two Gospels ! Luke, who received the history from the Apostles, as they preached on different occasions, for

different purposes, and without regard to chronological order, was as minute and precise in his facts as he could be, but was necessarily less exact in some matters of time and place than Matthew, who knew when and where the events transpired, because he was an eyewitness of their occurrence.

It has been before remarked, that we see the influence of Luke's Gentile education in prefixing to his Gospel a formal preface, so much after the taste of the Roman and Greek authors. We see the same thing in his marking events by the reign of the Roman emperor, or of Roman governors, — such as the birth of John, the birth of Christ, and the time when the Baptist began his ministry. We see the same thing, also, in the genealogy which Luke has given. Matthew, writing for Jews, traces the line from Abraham and David down to Christ, in order to prove that the ancient prophecies of a Messiah were fulfilled in him. But it was no part of Luke's object to prove this, because the Gentile Theophilus knew nothing of these prophecies. Accordingly, he gives a genealogy after the Gentile manner, ascending from the person whose lineage is given, upward to the founder of his family. Thus he entirely reverses the order of Matthew. These genealogies have been a great cause of perplexity to all commentators. On comparing them together, we find that there are discrepancies between them. We cannot doubt that they were copied from family records, in keeping of which the Jews have ever been scrupulously exact, and that, whatever errors may have crept into their frequent transcription since, they were originally correct. Else they would have been attacked, as they were not, by early Jewish and infidel opponents. The more common way of explaining these discrepancies is by supposing that several intermediate names have been dropped from the list

Matthew is the author of the first three gospels.
Luke is the author of the fourth gospel.

of Matthew ; and that, when Luke says that Joseph was the son of Heli (iii. 23), he means an adopted son, a son-in-law. Then Luke gives the pedigree of Mary's line, as Matthew gives that of Joseph's.

The influence of Luke's education is seen again throughout his Gospel in his style, structure of sentences, and use of words. His sentences are longer, more involved, and elaborated. He has a more copious use of words ; and although he sometimes adopts harsh Hebrew expressions, borrowed, no doubt, from his intercourse first with the Jews and then with the Apostles, yet his language generally is pronounced to be the purest Greek which the New Testament contains, and shows that he had been trained to a correct knowledge and careful use of that tongue. Traces have been found in his writings, it is thought, of his medical profession. Thus in Luke iv. 38 he distinguishes a fever by words employed by old medical writers, while in Acts xiii. 11 he uses a technical word for blindness.

In Luke's Gospel, therefore, we do not see so much of one kind of simplicity,—simplicity of language,—as we see in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark. In a man of Luke's education and life this could not exist. But we see just as much of another kind of simplicity,—simplicity of design, simplicity of heart. He had the same object before him that the other Evangelists had,—to record the life and words of Christ ; and as with them, so with him, this great object engrossed all attention. He himself is as nobody. He introduces nothing as coming from himself, no opinions, no conjectures, no reasonings, no inferences, no surprise, no admiration. In the language in which he had been educated, and with the minute accuracy of taste and habit, he gives nothing but the naked facts.

These facts he transmitted to his friend Theophilus, that

he might know the certainty of the things in which he had been instructed. This Gospel was God's message to him. None the less is it God's message to us, that, by studying its words, pondering its truths, obeying its instructions, and imbibing its spirit, we also may know the *certainty* of these things. And their certainty we may know. We cannot, indeed, go to the places which this Evangelist so minutely describes, nor inquire of the men with whom he journeyed. These are tests of his credibility which in their very nature are not perpetual, though by these his words were once tried, and they have abided. But there are other tests than these outward ones of the senses, by which we may determine, and by which alone, after all, we can determine, what is true and right and good. We have the test of our reason and conscience and heart. Let us bring the Gospel message home to a personal trial and proof. We shall then have the witness in ourselves. For our guide in life, our help in weakness, our comfort in sorrow, our support in death, it is God's precious gift to us, and that by which the secrets of all hearts shall at last be judged.

CHAPTER XII.

NOTICES OF THE LIFE OF JOHN.

WE come now to the life of one whose character is distinguished at once from that of all the other followers of Christ, and betrays itself in almost every verse of his writings. Mild and affectionate, faithful and confiding, a double portion of the Saviour's spirit seems to have rested upon

him; and hence what a peculiar tie connected the Teacher and the pupil together! Jesus was loved by John with a love which only John's deep heart could offer him, while John was the disciple whom Jesus loved.

Notices of his life are more clear and satisfactory than those pertaining to the other Evangelists. Matthew, Mark, and Luke all tell us that John was the son of Zebedee and Salome, that he lived in Bethsaida,—a little fishing town on the northern shore of the lake of Galilee,—and was brought up to his father's business, which was that of a fisherman. This was the common occupation of those who lived near that lake; and although it was an humble employment, it nevertheless appears, from various incidental notices, that John's father was not destitute of property, nor in a low condition of life. When called to be a disciple, we read that John left hired servants in the ship with his father. *Mark i. 20.* John appears always to have had a home of his own, to which he received Mary, the mother of his Lord, when she was commended to his care. *John xix. 27.*

By his mother John was related to Christ, and by no distant connection. Salome was a daughter of Joseph, born to him with other children before his espousal to Mary, the mother of Jesus. Hence Salome was reckoned our Lord's sister, and John was his nephew. This relationship explains several circumstances in this Gospel, and it is important, therefore, that it be borne in mind. It gives us reason to suspect that John was early acquainted with Jesus. He, living with his parents at Nazareth, was but a few miles distant from John, following his father's business on the lake. Being related, no doubt their families sometimes met, and thus John can hardly be supposed to have been ignorant of all the wonderful events preceding and following the birth of Christ, such as the appearance of the angel to his mother,

the visit of the Magi at Bethlehem, the mysterious and deeply pondered words said of him when he was presented in the temple, the divine communications that directed his flight into Egypt, and his ever memorable visit, when twelve years old, to Jerusalem. Events in themselves so wonderful, and so clearly showing that a peculiar providence was watching over Jesus, and was preparing him for some high work, must have been well known to near relatives, all of whom were then looking for the consolation of Israel ; and very naturally did they lead the mind of John to determine upon the course he pursued. He resolved to improve the first favorable opportunity that presented to connect himself with Jesus, that by intercourse with him he might be prepared for that new order of events which it was so clear God was soon to establish. That opportunity was near at hand. Jesus had been baptized, and had passed through the scene of his temptation, and while on his way from Capernaum to visit the villages of Galilee, he came to the lake, where he saw the two brothers, James and John, in a ship with their father, mending their nets. Upon invitation, they left the ship and followed Jesus. John was the fourth one now added to the number of disciples, and we are told that he was the youngest of the twelve.

It is impossible, as has been beautifully said by Dr. Greenwood, in his Lives of the Apostles, that either John or his brother could have dreamed of the consequences to which the step they had now taken would lead. " Hitherto it had been their only care to rise up, day by day, to the contented exercise of their humble toil, to ply their oars, to spread their sails, to cast their nets, and to dispose of their freight in their native village or in the neighbouring towns, for the support of themselves and their families." The scene just around them, the peaceful lake, the surrounding hills, their

own low-roofed dwellings, looking out kindly upon them, and containing all that they loved,—this was their little world. Here they lived as their fathers lived before them; and here, hoping for the long-promised deliverance of their nation, but for themselves anticipating no changes but the few vicissitudes of their calling, they expect to live, till they lie down to sleep with their fathers, as calmly, as unknowing, and as unknown as they. But what a change passes over their lives from the moment they connect themselves with Christ! They become witnesses of the most wonderful events, and are in a school that will make them the most wonderful men of all recorded time. Soon a power is conferred upon them, and a work is intrusted to them, which cast into utter insignificance the authority and pomp of kings. "Home, kindred, country, they forsake. Their nets may hang and bleach in the sun; their boats may rot piecemeal on the shore; for the owners of them are far away, sailing over seas to which that of Genesareth is a pond; exciting whole cities and countries to wonder and tumult; answering before kings; imprisoned, persecuted, tortured"; but everywhere gloriously carrying on a work as God's instruments, which will hand down their names to all ages, and in time change the face of the whole world. Instruments of God, indeed, they must have been, for how soon would a work so begun, and carried on by such men, have come to naught, if it had not been of God.

We have said that these men were in a school. Such, indeed, was the influence of the great Teacher to which they were now subjected. Under him they acquired new principles of action. Gradually did the characters of all the disciples experience a great change. They were made to feel that there was a bondage, worse than that of Rome, from which they were to be delivered; that there was a more

blessed kingdom than one of outward glory and power, which Christ came to set up ; and that into this they could be received only by most intimate acquaintance, in heart and life, with deep spiritual truth. How great a change, then, in the views and characters of these men, was wrought by their personal intercourse with the Saviour ! Observe that it was brought about, not by any sudden and supernatural wrench of their natures, but by the natural processes of enlightening the mind, purifying the affections, and reforming the life. And what a testimony to his power, and to the power of his religion, was it, that these humble and untutored fishermen of Galilee had their hearts filled with a sublime and world-embracing purpose, and were armed with a spirit by which they went forth to a greater work than man had ever before conceived, and by which they triumphed and were glorified.

But of all the disciples there was no one upon whom the influences of the Saviour's spirit and life seem to have produced so great an effect as upon John. During the early part of his connection with Christ, this disciple is occasionally presented to us in a light which does not win our love. The youngest, as before said, of the twelve, with little experience of life, and having strong feelings easily aroused, no doubt the title Boanerges, — son of thunder, — which Jesus early bestowed upon John (see Mark iii. 17), was suggested by his warm and impetuous temper. This same temper led him, when indignant at the conduct of the Samaritans, who refused to receive his Master into their city, to ask if fire from heaven should not descend and destroy them. Luke ix. 54. So, also, on another occasion, we have a manifestation of a spirit which we cannot commend. Eager for the establishment of the new kingdom, then supposed to be one of temporal power and greatness, it appears that John, with

his brother James, made a request to Christ, either personally, as we infer from the account in Mark x. 35, or through their mother, as it would appear from Matthew xx. 20, that they might be first, and sit one on his right hand and the other on his left. It seems at first view difficult to believe that it could have been John, the gentle and affectionate disciple whom Jesus loved, that manifested such a temper as this. And yet have we not often found that persons, who possess naturally strong and easily excited feelings, become the loveliest characters we have ever known, if only those feelings are governed and balanced by a deep experience and discipline of religious truth?

In the latter part of his connection with Christ, John's character appears very different from what it appeared at first. We find no more instances of his hasty temper. That was subdued and governed by the mild rebukes and faithful teachings of his Master. Henceforth he became, what we everywhere find him to be, gentle, meek, full of reverence, confiding in his Saviour with a trust that never once wavered, and penetrated in his whole being with the spirit of love. How often have we known those who have natures made up of the richest elements, but who are exposed, through some one weak point, to shipwreck and ruin! When we see such cases, how much do we feel that man has need of a power to guide, guard, and preserve, to bind the conflicting elements within him into one well-developed and well-fortified character! We may still find that power, where John found it, in communion with Christ.

As we follow the history of this disciple, it is easy for us to mark the progress of the strong affection that grew up between him and his Master and Lord. Thus John was selected by Jesus to be, with Peter and James, a witness of some of the most important and trying scenes of his life,

such as the transfiguration and the agony of the garden. So, also, at the ever memorable scene of the last supper, the position which John occupied at the table is a proof of the love which Jesus felt for him. He was leaning on his bosom ; that is, as it was the custom to recline at meals, and John was next to Jesus, his head was brought near his Master's breast ; and this was a position which was reserved by him who gave an entertainment for the person whom he most esteemed. It was while this disciple was thus leaning, that Peter beckoned to him that he should ask Jesus who it was that should betray him. John did as he was requested, and Jesus indicated who the traitor was by giving Judas a sop. All this seems to have been done in private, and apart from the knowledge of the other disciples, and proves the great measure of condescension and confidence which was exercised by the Master towards this his favorite follower. John, then, had reason to style himself "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (xx. 2). All the members of that little band were dear to Jesus,—dearer than his own life. But for this one — young, confiding, reflecting his own gentle and affectionate spirit, with him in his trials and leaning upon his bosom — he felt a peculiar love. Who can say that our religion does not encourage particular friendship between kindred hearts, when we have this beautiful example in its very Founder before our eyes ? And as this friendship was declared before all, and was acknowledged by all, and allusions to it therefore could give no offence, how gratefully sensible of its value does John prove himself to have been, by assuming no other name in his history than the disciple whom Jesus loved ! What other words could add any thing to these ?

The next notice we have of John is at the crucifixion. He was the only one of all the twelve who had the fortitude

to go to that scene of suffering and danger. Says the writer before quoted, in his life of this Apostle,—“ How touchingly is it manifested on this awful occasion, that the softest natures are often the noblest and the most fearless too, and that those which are apparently the most daring and masculine may yet shrink away in the time of peril and distress ! Who in that hour of darkness,—darkness in the heavens and in the hearts of men,— who in that hour of abandonment, when even the Son of God cried out that he was forsaken,— who of all his followers were with him then, to support him by their sympathy, and prove to him their love ? In the midst of scoffing soldiers and brutal executioners, under the lowering sky, and just below the frightful cross, we behold four weeping *females* and *one* disciple, the youngest and the gentlest of the twelve, braving the horrors of this place of blood, braving the anger of those in authority and the insults of those who do their bidding, determined to be near their Master in his agonies, and ready on the spot and at the moment to share them. And what is it that braces up the nerves of this feeble company to such a singular pitch of fortitude and daring ? The simple but unconquerable strength of affection ; the generous omnipotence of their attachment and gratitude. In the might of their love they ascend the hill of Calvary, and take their station beneath the cross, hearing nothing amidst all that tumult but the promptings of their devoted hearts, seeing nothing but their dying Lord, remembering nothing but that he was dear to them, and that he was in misery. O, how loftily does courage like this rise above that ruder and earthly courage which rushes to the battle-field, and is crowned with the applause of the world ! It calls for none of those excitements and stimulants from without, which goad rough spirits into madness, but relies on those resources that are within, those

precious stores and holy powers which are the strength of a single and faithful breast. That is the courage of the animal ; this is of the soul. It is pure ; it is divine. It was such as moved the complacent regard of the Saviour himself, even in the height of his sufferings. Hanging on the cross bleeding and exhausted, yet when he saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing by, he was touched by their constancy ; his thoughts were recalled to earth ; the domestic affections rushed into his bosom ; and with a tender care, which provided at once a protection for his parent and a reward for his friend, ‘he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son ! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother !’ Where was there ever so affecting a bequest as was then made, when love and filial piety triumphed over suffering ? Where was there ever so affecting an adoption as that which then took place, when attachment and fidelity triumphed over fear ? The last earthly care of Jesus was accomplished. His mother was confided to the disciple whom he best loved. The favorite disciple eagerly accepted the honorable and precious charge, for ‘from that hour,’ as we are told by himself, he ‘took her unto his own home.’” John xix. 27.

We next meet with John at the resurrection of Christ. Informed by Mary Magdalene, who went early to the sepulchre, that the stone had been rolled away, both John and Peter ran eagerly to the spot, and found the tomb empty. And here a slight circumstance is mentioned, which shows that John was more quick than all the other disciples to understand the words of Christ. They knew not the meaning of the saying that Christ must rise again from the dead. So unprepared were they for his resurrection, that Peter, when he saw the body was not there, did not ascribe the fact to its true cause. But John saw and believed. John xxviii. 8.

"It was into the mind of the beloved disciple that the light first broke. He first believed the glorious truth, that death was vanquished by the Son of God, and that Jesus of Nazareth was the Prince of Life."

Not long after this, when Jesus appeared to his disciples for the last time before his ascension, he foretold Peter's violent death; and that disciple, seeing John just behind him, desired to know what his lot was to be. The answer of Jesus was, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" This answer caused a saying to go abroad that John should not die. We shall soon see what was the probable meaning of these prophetic words.

When finally the Saviour left the earth, and in obedience to his words the disciples came together at Jerusalem, John was there with them. His name is the third in the list given by Luke in the beginning of the book of Acts. But little is said of the part which John took in the missionary labors of the Apostles. We are only told, that once he was imprisoned with Peter, and once went with that disciple to teach in Samaria. It is at this point that the Scripture account of John closes. All early testimonies agree that he continued to reside in Judea, constantly taking filial care of Mary till the time of her death, which occurred about fifteen years after the ascension of Christ. John does not appear to have become a preacher to the Gentiles until after the destruction of Jerusalem. This event occurred in the year 70, and when John was about seventy years of age. It was this event, as is generally understood, to which Jesus referred, when he intimated that John should tarry until his coming,—his second coming in judgment upon the Jews. John was the only one of the first disciples who lived to see the holy city overthrown, her glorious temple destroyed, and the very ground on which it stood ploughed up by the hands

of the Gentiles. Prior to this event, Matthew had published his Gospel in Judea, and had suffered martyrdom in Ethiopia; Mark had published his Gospel at Rome, and had died in Alexandria in Egypt; the aged Luke had published his Gospel in Greece, and had there gone down to his grave; and all the rest of the twelve, Peter, James, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, and Bartholomew, though meeting for the most part the death of martyrs, had yet finished their course with joy. John still survived to bear the testimony of an eyewitness of Jesus to a generation that succeeded these holy men.

What remains to be said of him may be very briefly told. He journeyed to Ephesus, in Asia Minor, and presided over the church in that place. In the persecution of the Christians under the Emperor Domitian, about the year 90, John was banished to the isle of Patmos. Here, as is commonly supposed, he wrote the book of Revelation. Under the successor of Domitian, John was permitted to return to Ephesus, where he soon published his Epistles, certainly the first Epistle, about which there has never been any dispute, though the genuineness of the other two has been sometimes called in question. Soon after this John wrote out his Gospel. We have been distinctly informed what was his object in doing this. It was to correct some errors prevalent at Ephesus, and to supply what was omitted in the three other Gospel histories, each of which he had seen. After this, John lived to attain the age of nearly one hundred years. His image is presented to us as a man bowed down with age, the sole living eyewitness of events the most memorable which the world has ever known, his whole heart and life imbued with the gentle, heavenly wisdom which he had learned from the lips of his Divine Friend, and devoting his failing strength to teaching that peculiar spirit of the Gospel

on which he so much delighted to dwell,—its spirit of holy love. The following story of his last days is well authenticated, and is fully recommended by its perfect conformity with his character. It is said, that, when the infirmities of age so grew upon him at Ephesus that he was no longer able to preach to his converts, he used to be led to the church at every public meeting, that he might say to them only these few words, “Little children, love one another.” And when they, wearied with the constant repetition of the same thing, asked him why he persisted in saying this, his reply was, “Because it is the command of our Lord; and if we do nothing more, this alone is sufficient.”

He peacefully closed his long life, just at the beginning of the second century after Christ.

Such was the life of that disciple whom Jesus loved. Let us not fail to mark what encouragement to the humblest Christian there is in the fact, that the character which Jesus loved was such a character as this. It was made up, not of those shining, brilliant qualities which are possessed only by the few, but of that gentleness, meekness, reverence, faith, love, which we all may acquire, and by which we, too, may commend ourselves to the love of our Divine Master and Friend. So, also, in the fact that it was such a disciple as John that Jesus most loved, we may find new confirmation of the pure and holy purpose of Christ’s mission. Had Jesus been bent upon accomplishing some great outward change for his own glory and fame, it seems inconceivable that he should have attached himself to the gentle, humble, retiring spirit of John. Had the fishermen of Galilee contrived the whole Gospel history, we know that a far different spirit than this of John was the popular Jewish spirit of those times; and how surely would they have represented some one like the bold and ambitious Peter as the favorite disci-

ple ! Or, in whatever age or land we suppose the Gospels to have been forged, let us ask ourselves, where or when has such a man as John been one of the world's honored ones ? The spirit which made him the beloved disciple could have been no other than that which looks beneath all outward distinctions to what is in man's heart and soul, which, far more than the noisy gifts that the world has always honored, prizes humility, gentleness, and love, and which recognizes in manifestations of these the character that is truly good and great. Such we know was the spirit of Christ. The greatness which he loves, and to which he directs our aim, is the greatness that belongs to the highest part of our nature, which we share with children of God, with angels and spirits of the just made perfect.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN.

As respects the immediate motive which induced John to write his Gospel, we have the words of two independent authorities, which, as they come from an age soon succeeding the publication of this Gospel, and from the most distinguished writers of those early times, have ever been regarded as throwing a trustworthy and highly important light upon this subject. One of these writers has these words :— “ John, desiring to extirpate the errors sown in the minds of men by Cerinthus and his followers, published his Gospel.” — *Irenaeus.*

This statement, that John had some reference in his Gos-

pel to a peculiar and pernicious philosophy that prevailed in his time at Ephesus, is confirmed by several other sources. What this philosophy was, we shall have occasion to see hereafter. The other writer to whom we referred has these words :—“ The first three Gospels being now delivered unto all men, and to John himself, he approved of them, and confirmed the truth of their narrative by his own testimony.” — *Eusebius.*

We find this statement fully substantiated by an examination of John’s Gospel. It bears frequent marks that he had seen the three preceding histories. Matthew, Mark, and Luke, as we all know, have the same facts in common. It was John’s object, on the other hand, to pass by all that they had related, and to glean up what they had omitted. Accordingly, in his whole Gospel, with the exception of the events attending the crucifixion, there are but three facts which he has in common with the other Evangelists. Two of these — the feeding of the five thousand (John vi. 5), and the voyage connected therewith (John vi. 17) — he has repeated, because they were indispensable as introductory to the discourses that follow. The other is the account of Mary’s anointing Jesus (John xii. 3), which John has recorded fully for a reason to which we shall soon refer. The beginning of miracles in Cana of Galilee, the raising of Lazarus, the conversation with the woman of Samaria, the washing of the disciples’ feet, and the discourses and prayers uttered by Jesus just before his crucifixion, — these are instances of his supplying what the other writers had omitted, all these being found in John’s Gospel alone.

This Gospel presents still another remarkable appearance, which confirms the historical account, that its author had seen the three preceding narratives. He frequently alludes to facts recorded in those narratives, without giving any

relation of them himself. Thus he presupposes his readers to have knowledge of them by means of the other Gospels, and without this knowledge his own history would be in many places unintelligible. A few illustrations of this remark may be here named.

Before giving an account of the question that arose between the disciples of John the Baptist and some of the Jews about purifying, our Evangelist says, "John was not yet cast into prison." John iii. 24. And yet in the whole of this Gospel there is nothing said about John's imprisonment. The Evangelist presupposes his readers acquainted with that fact from the other Gospels, in which it is distinctly related. Nor is this all. Why should this fact of John the Baptist be here inserted at all? Evidently it is not required as an explanation of the narrative in this Gospel, for this nowhere implies that the Baptist was now or at any time imprisoned. It has the appearance, therefore, of a correction of other accounts, which had fallen into a slight inaccuracy. Such a correction is really applicable to two of our Gospels. Matthew says, directly after the temptation, before Jesus is related to have gone to Capernaum, that John had been cast into prison. Matt. iv. 12. Mark retained the same statement. Mark i. 14. The Gospel of John represents that the discussion about purifying took place after our Lord had left Capernaum, and had made a visit to Jerusalem, and was on his return to Galilee. John iii. 24 was intended to correct the inaccuracy of Matthew and Mark, who had antedated the imprisonment of the Baptist.

When Jesus washed the disciples' feet, we read (John xiii. 4), that he took a towel and girded himself, and poured water into a basin, *the supper being ended*, as the words read with which this beautiful incident in the life of Christ begins. The supper here referred to was undoubtedly the

last supper, that supper at which John was present; for he leaned upon his Master's bosom, and saw all that was done, and heard all that was said. Yet this Evangelist has given no account whatever of that event. He found it correctly described by the other Evangelists, with whose accounts he presupposes his readers to be familiar, and hence his mere allusion to it would be at once understood.

In like manner, also, John remotely alludes to Christ's baptism (John i. 32), although the history of that event is totally omitted by him. Indeed, we should not be able to understand to what the language of this passage referred, did we not possess from another quarter the information which is here presupposed.

Thus there is a clear and marked agreement between the historical account, that John had seen the other narratives before writing his own, and the appearances of his Gospel itself. He evidently passes by what they related, supplies what they had omitted, alludes to facts attested by them as familiarly known, while in some cases he evidently retouches their narrative in order to correct some slight inaccuracies into which they had fallen. Beside the instances already given of such a revisal, two others may be here briefly alluded to. One is the account of the anointing of Jesus. John xii. 3. This is one of the few facts which John has in common with the other Evangelists. They have related it imperfectly. Matthew and Mark state that the woman anointed the head of Jesus; Luke, that she anointed his feet, and that she wiped them with the hair of her head. The former state the dissatisfaction of Judas respecting it, while Luke mentions the reproach of the Pharisee, and the rebuke he received. Add to all, that these Evangelists do not agree in assigning the same period for the occurrence of this event. For this reason, John goes carefully over the

whole history of the incident. He combines in one clear narrative the broken and fragmentary accounts given by his predecessors, while he fixes the time of this anointing to be just before the betrayal of Christ, by showing that it was one of the causes which hurried on that event, since Judas, failing of getting money, as he had hoped, by the sale of the ointment, goes directly and bargains, for thirty pieces of silver, to give his Master up. The history of the resurrection is another example of John's revision of the narrative of the other Evangelists. Matthew's account of this event is hurried, and both Mark and Luke have neglected to indicate the exact order in which the occurrences succeeded one another. John departs from his usual rule of not repeating what the other Evangelists had already recorded, and re-writes their account,—tells the whole story over again. John xx. 1. When we compare his narrative with that of his predecessors, we shall see that the former is the most intelligible and complete.

These facts are minute in themselves, and yet how important that they should be known ! What evidence do they give of John's great care that an exact narrative should be handed down ! What stronger confidence may we place in the narratives of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, when we know, that, though written at different times, in different countries, by different men, and for different classes of readers, they yet needed such few, and for the most part unessential, corrections ! And what an interesting fact is it, that in the good providence of God all these different histories, before they were committed to the ever-flowing stream of time, were seen by one of the first disciples and constant eyewitnesses of all that they relate, and were by him carefully examined ! Nor is the manner in which he corrected their mistakes and supplied their deficiencies less worthy of our

grateful notice. John did not destroy the writings of his predecessors, and give us a history that rests on his name alone. He drew up his own more accurate and independent account, to be placed *by the side* of their histories, so that we might see both their text and his commentary, their errors and his corrections. Thus his Gospel sheds light upon their meaning, and gives new strength to their authority.

John's Gospel has a peculiar interest and value from another source. His historical scene is different from that of the other Evangelists. He records for the most part only what is done in Judea, just around Jerusalem, while the other writers record for the most part only what is done in Galilee, around Capernaum and the lake. When they conduct Jesus to the borders of Judea they there lose sight of him, and John takes up the narrative and accompanies him in his course. He, however, does not follow him back into Galilee, but forsakes him on the borders of that country, where the events of his life had already been related by Matthew, Mark, and Luke. How naturally does the explanation of this fact suggest itself to our minds! As the disciples were natives of Galilee, what Jesus said and did there would most interest them, and would be by them most clearly understood. When after their Saviour's crucifixion they became preachers in Jerusalem, it was of what transpired in Galilee that they would more frequently speak. Their hearers had heard of the events that occurred in their own city and neighbourhood. For this reason, they would ask about the scenes that were witnessed in the remote province of Galilee, where Jesus spent most of his time and performed the most of his miracles. We have seen that the Evangelists afterwards wrote their histories very much as they had orally told them, and hence it is easy to see why their historical scene was chiefly Galilee. It was John's care, therefore,

in supplying the deficiencies of his predecessors, to describe what was said and done in *Judea*,—a task for which his long residence in Jerusalem of fifteen years, when he had the affectionate charge of Mary, the mother of Jesus, peculiarly fitted him. Without John's Gospel, the story of the Saviour's life would have been but little more than half told ; but with this, the history is made full and complete.

In noticing some of the peculiarities of John's Gospel, we must not pass by its introduction (John i. 1–18), though it would be wandering from our purpose to dwell upon it long. Before we can understand this proem, we must know something of that peculiar philosophy to which we referred at the beginning of this chapter. This philosophy was called Gnosticism ; Ephesus was its seat ; and Cerinthus, one of its leading advocates, was expounding its doctrines in that city at the very time John was there writing his Gospel. It is not easy in a few words to describe this philosophy, because it is so foreign to our modes of thought. It may be sufficient to say, that the Gnostics referred all evil to matter, which they believed was created, not by God, but by an inferior divinity, called by them Demiurgos. The space between this inferior God and Jehovah was occupied, as they supposed, by various orders of angels, to which they applied the names *light*, *life*, and one of great distinction they named the *logos*, or *word*, whom they regarded as an impersonation of the power of God. All these angels emanated from God, as the light of one lamp emanates from another. They were employed in creating parts of the universe. They were not admitted into the presence of the Supreme, but inhabited a remote place in the heavens, called *fulness*. This philosophy was a subtile compound of Pagan, Jewish, and Christian doctrines, and throughout the early ages of the Church it threatened to be the most fatal foe to the simplicity that is in Christ.

Not improperly, therefore, does John, writing in Ephesus, begin his Gospel with an allusion to this heresy. Every sentence of this introduction is an affirmation against some Gnostic tenet. The logos or word was in the beginning, not created in time; with God, not inhabiting a part of the remote heavens; it was God himself, not a distinct angel; and it was the same in the beginning as now, not something that has undergone an emanation. It made all things. Life and light flow from it, and are not distinct angels. And then the Evangelist proceeds to show how a witness to the true light was raised up, and how at length the power of God became incarnate, and dwelt among us in the glory of the Only Begotten of the Father.

We have one mode of expression among us not wholly unlike those used by the Gnostics. We sometimes speak of *nature* as something distinct from God. We say nature causes the seasons to change, and the flowers to appear. If we annexed to our use of this word one or two other particulars corresponding to those ancient beliefs, such as these, that nature is an angelic emanation from God, and made only a part of the visible universe, and lived remote from the Supreme, we could confute such a system in no better words than these: — “In the beginning was nature, and nature was with God, and nature was God. All things were made by nature. And nature became incarnate, and dwelt among us the Only Begotten of the Father.”

In this introduction we thus see nothing contradictory to what is so clearly and solemnly affirmed in the eighteenth verse of this chapter. Taken as a whole, instead of being obscure, it is of plain, weighty significance, and instead of being misplaced, it constitutes an appropriate introduction to the narrative that succeeds.

Thus far we have spoken of causes that give interest and

value to the Gospel of John, arising from the circumstances under which it was composed. It also possesses great interest and value from the peculiar character of its author. How does his gentle and loving spirit breathe from every part of it ! It has been called "a tale of the affections," and it merits this title. In all his descriptions, John appears to set forth those scenes, and to dwell fondly upon them, which appeal to the deepest and tenderest emotions,— the marriage supper at Cana, the conversation with the woman of Samaria, the raising of Lazarus, the last interviews the Saviour had with his disciples. So, also, John was preëminent in his comprehension of the entirely spiritual nature of the new religion. He saw and felt that this religion was an inward life, a principle in the heart, calming all passions, calling forth the deepest treasures of love, trust, and joy, and making the soul one with Jesus and one with God. The other Evangelists have given us a plain, straightforward statement of facts. The whole Gospel history passed through their minds without receiving any coloring from themselves. It is well for us that it did so. We have before observed how much we owe to the fact, that these writers were simple, unlettered men, through whom the history of Christ comes down to us in the naked simplicity of bare facts, without any comment or coloring of their own. But when we have learned the facts from the other Gospels, what devout reader of the New Testament does not turn with refreshing interest to the warm, glowing writings of John ? In these we see the action of Christian truth upon his heart. His remembrances of Christ's words and deeds clustered around the two great features of his own character,— love to God and love to man. And this spirit of love, presiding over every description and hallowing every scene, gives a subduing and quickening power to his narration. This is doubt-

less the reason why Christians in all ages have felt the greatest interest in the Gospel of John, have read it the most, and have dwelt with most fondness upon its words of tenderness and love. The early fathers of the Church used to say that the other Gospels were the letter, this was the spirit ; the others were flesh, this was soul ; the others were earthly, this was heavenly. But all such comparisons are unjust. They tend to exalt John's narrative by depressing the works of his fellow-laborers. They are all of heaven, and of the spirit that maketh alive. They are all in remarkable keeping with the character of the men that wrote them. They all have that variety, and were composed under those peculiar circumstances, which may justly give us the greatest confidence that they contain words of soberness and truth. We should thank God, then, for them all. They are his precious gift to us, providentially made in the beginning, and providentially handed down to us as the rich legacy of ages.

Of John's power of description, we may take his account of the raising of Lazarus as an example. John xi. 18–44. The story is told with few words, with plain words ; yet all is so natural, so graphic, so full of life, that we seem to see the whole scene before us. It seems, at first view, unaccountable that this surprising event should have been omitted by the other Evangelists. It was one of the most astonishing acts of the Saviour's life ; it was most publicly done, in the suburbs of the capital, in open day, in the presence of many witnesses. It is impossible it should have escaped the memory of any Christian historian of the time. Why, then, have Matthew, Mark, and Luke passed it by ?

How naturally does a circumstance, mentioned incidentally by John, account for their profound silence ! We read that after the miracle many of the chief priests determined

to kill Lazarus, because his presence among the Jews had led many of them to believe in Jesus. John xii. 10, 11. Consequently, to publish this miracle while Lazarus and his sisters lived in Jerusalem was only to set up that worthy family as marks to the malice of the enemies of the Christian name. During their lifetime, therefore, the Evangelists, it is probable, refrained from descriptions of this event, and habits of narration may have led to its omission even in distant places, where, as in the case of Mark and Luke, the full record of it might have brought no harm. But the reason for omission here alluded to did not exist in the case of John. He survived Lazarus and his sisters, and when they had died and were beyond the reach of their foes, he gives a full history of the miracle.

As another instance of John's power of narration, look to the long interview Jesus had with his disciples just before the crucifixion, as described by this Evangelist, from the beginning of the thirteenth to the close of the seventeenth chapters of his Gospel. There is no part of the Gospel narrative more deeply affecting than this, and we shall do well to observe the order of events and the train of reflection, which will be now stated in the words of another.

"Judas, the betrayer, had left the company to commit his traitorous act. Now, said Jesus, is the Son of Man glorified. I am but a little while with you. I leave you the commandment of love which I have exemplified. He then exhorts his disciples not to despond at his death. He is going to his Father to prepare a place for them. He then utters his farewell; but says he will come again. Then he bids them rise and go hence.

"While they were seated, the discourse maintained the tender form of conversation. But after having risen he proceeds to exhort them to united and persevering efforts in

concurrence with his purposes, and with increased earnestness he admonishes them to love each other and himself, and to expect, and to endure with a resigned temper, a cruel lot. Again he promises them the spirit, begins to mention more frequently his approaching death, and silence now reigns among the disciples. No one presumes to speak. Once only they question among themselves what is the meaning of the words, ‘A little while and ye shall not see me, and again a little while and ye shall see me.’ He perceives this, and explains himself. They believe that they now understand him.

“Then the occasion becomes more solemn. The discourse takes a higher tone. Jesus stands at the goal of his career. His conscience bears him witness that he has accomplished the mission given him by his Father, to bring truth into the world. With deep emotion he commands his disciples to his Father’s protection, and not only they, but all who should believe in him. Every thought and feeling bears marks of belonging to that eventful hour.

“And is not all this in accordance with the character of Christ? Is it not the farewell of an exalted and noble soul, which, untroubled by the thought of impending suffering, occupies itself wholly with its lofty purposes, and with the business of instructing and consoling those whom it leaves behind? Could the gradation in the conversation possibly be more natural? Can there be imagined a more beautiful rise than is here presented, — first mutual remark, then increasing silence among the listeners, broken only by a low question, till ultimately the last whisper dies away, and in the universal stillness the soul mounts upward to its highest elevations? ”*

* Hug's Introduction, p. 435.

Nothing but reality could have been the type of this. John wrote what he saw and what he heard, and on no other supposition can we possibly account for the wonderful record he has given us. And this same remark applies to all the Evangelists. That, in that rude age of the world, they should have conceived of a character like that of Christ, that all of them should have presented that one image, so sublime, so godlike, without one thing to mar its perfect naturalness and consistency,—no, it could not have been, if there had existed no outward reality to give them the image they describe. And thus, how much easier is it to believe that the character made the biographers, than that the biographers made the character! Hence it was the confession of Rousseau, that “the fiction of such a character is a greater miracle than its reality.”* Blessed be God that we have been taught to believe that it is a reality, that it was a living reality in the person of Jesus Christ, and may be now to a degree reproduced, a living reality, in ourselves! And to aid us in this great work, let us thank the Father of all mercies that we have these words written and sent down to us that we might have life.

* His precise words are,—“L'inventeur en seroit plus étonnant que le héros.” — *Emile*, liv. iv.

CHAPTER XIV.

VIEW OF THE GOSPELS AS A WHOLE.

We have now looked at each of the Gospels as a separate and independent work. By combining the four narratives together, accepting whatever is peculiar to each, and dropping what is obviously mere repetition, we have one complete history of the ministry of Christ. Which Gospel comes the nearest to exact chronological arrangement, and for this reason should be selected as the basis of the rest? At first thought, it may seem as if this question must be answered in favor of Luke. His habits of exactness, and his declaration in the preface to his Gospel of his intention to write "in order" (Luke i. 3), appear to support such a claim. But the original word here translated "in order" has no necessary reference to the order of *time*; its meaning is as well expressed by the adverb *methodically*; while Luke's grouping parables together which we can hardly suppose to have been uttered at the same time, and his occasional indefinite allusions to times which are more carefully designated by Matthew, have led to the opinion that chronological order is not so generally marked by the former as by the latter Evangelist. In favor of Matthew it has likewise been urged, that, being a personal follower of Christ, he had means of knowing the exact chronology of events which neither Mark nor Luke possessed; and though Matthew shares this advantage with John, yet the purpose of this Apostle, as we have seen, was to supply what the other writers had omitted, and to make Judea chiefly the scene of his narrative. John's Gospel, therefore, so far from furnish-

ing data for a chronology, needs a chronology elsewhere derived, to show the arrangement of its disconnected portions.

For these reasons, Matthew's Gospel has been preferred as the basis of a harmony. This point settled, every reader can easily make a harmony for himself. But little reference need be had to the Gospel of Mark. Only about twenty-four verses of this Gospel constitute additional matter; all the rest is found, either in the same words or in substance, in the other Gospels. Both Luke's Gospel and John's can be distributed without difficulty, each portion in its proper place, according to the chronology of Matthew. There is but one point which will occasion any perplexity. While the record of Matthew and Luke covers but two passovers in the ministry of Christ, John, on the other hand, appears to refer to three. It is believed, however, that this latter Evangelist does not in fact extend the ministry of Christ over a longer space of time than Matthew and Luke. The passover referred to in John vi. 4 is taken to be the same as that on which Christ was crucified. There is reason to think that John ante-dated the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand; and if we place the sixth chapter of his Gospel between those of the eleventh and twelfth, there is nothing to conflict with the chronology of Matthew. Many of the best authorities concur in this view of the case.

These hints are sufficient to enable any one to form a view of the life of Christ as a consistent and connected whole. Our present purpose is to speak of the moral impression which such a view leaves on the heart. This is one of the most convincing and satisfactory arguments for the truth of the whole Gospel history that can be offered. A plain, unlettered man is as good a judge of this argument, as is a scholar of the most extensive learning. Perhaps he

is a better judge, inasmuch as he would be more likely to fall back upon the simple, natural feelings of his conscience and heart.

What, then, is the impression which a perusal of the Gospel history naturally leaves upon the heart? It is that this is an honest book. Ten thousand unlettered and simple-minded persons read it, and they rise up with the impression that this is an honest book. They feel a regard for it, just as we all feel regard for a man in whom we discern marks of honesty, integrity, and truth, so clear and strong that we place the utmost confidence in him, and would trust him with any thing we possess. They believe it, just as sometimes in a court of justice a jury believes a witness who delivers his testimony with a simplicity, straight-forwardness, and sincerity which overwhelm all opposition, and carry conviction to the heart, even against much evidence on the other side. And they are right in placing reliance on these. There is a heart knowledge as well as a head knowledge. We all feel that there is something in the higher manifestations of truth and uprightness which fraud and dishonesty can never put on. At any rate, the garments of truth do not sit easy and natural on the shoulders of a lie. A lie is something exaggerated and bloated; the dress it assumes will not stretch to cover it all up, and so the lie peeps out. But there is an ease and naturalness, an openness, an air of conscious integrity, which belong to truth alone. These are traits which strike the beholder at once. They speak to us with a voice of authority. We reverence them. We confide in them as we confide in nothing else. We find them our truest and safest guides.

It is not easy to analyze this impression which the Gospel history makes upon our hearts, and to say what all the elements are of our conviction that this is a true and honest

account. Consider what your experience has been with some personal friend. You are satisfied he is an honest man. You feel that your property and character would be perfectly safe in his hands. But why you feel so, you might not be able readily to tell. Your conviction is the result of a thousand little circumstances which you would find it difficult to name, though hardly any more formal and tangible evidence could make it stronger than it is. So is it when we read the records of the life of Jesus. We feel that they are honest and true; but how shall we describe the causes which produce that impression, the delicate touches of reality and truth which we see on every page and in every verse, the sure tokens of uprightness and sincerity which the *heart* feels, but of which we give so poor account when we come to set them down in words?

Some of the reasons, however, why we *feel* that the Gospel history is honest and true may be named, and on the more obvious of these we shall now proceed to offer a few words.

The simplicity and artlessness of manner in which the Gospel history is told may first be named. Like honest witnesses in a court of justice, the Evangelists give their testimony with a plainness and straight-forwardness which find their way at once to the heart. There is no attempt whatever to set the story out, to dress it up, to round it off, to embellish it, no appearance of trying to make a show, of hunting after epithets, of straining for effect. Take any transaction they record, and an account of it cannot be given in fewer and plainer words than those which they use. They speak like men who speak from full hearts, who never once think how they shall speak, who only open their mouths and the fact speaks itself.

Again, what candid writers are these historians of the life

of Jesus! They appear to tell the whole truth, even when it makes against themselves and against the object they had in view in writing their histories, with just as much fulness and freedom as they tell any part of it. Thus, on several occasions, after our Lord had wrought some of his most surprising works, they say, "*Many doubted, some disbelieved, and would no longer walk with him.*" This is narrated without the slightest appearance of reluctance and hesitation. It cannot be said with propriety that the information is conveyed as a confession. It is given with the utmost freedom, with the air of men whose only concern it is to give all the facts in the case. They freely tell us, likewise, of their own prejudices, mistakes, gross ignorance, and faithlessness to their Master; and all this with no attempt to conceal their errors, with no affectation of humility, and with no parade of frankness. It all comes in as part of the history, in the same simple, unconscious manner in which the whole record is made.

Moreover, the narrative is not given by these men as if they felt that they had a case to make out. There is no attempt whatever to win the favor of their readers, no smoothing the story down so as to make it more acceptable, no fear lest you should draw wrong inferences, and not the least anxiety lest they should be disbelieved. Indeed, the bare possibility that they should be charged with falsehood seems never to have suggested itself to them. Their only concern is to tell the facts in the case. When they have done this, they leave them, with no preface, no argument, no comment, no exhortation,—without one single word asserting their veracity, or setting forth the importance and value of their history. They are witnesses and historians, and nothing else. Every thing is told with the air of impartial, almost of indifferent spectators.

We have before noticed the remarkable self-forgetfulness of these writers. Excepting a mention of their errors and mistakes, they never once, from beginning to end, allude to themselves. They say nothing of their feelings, of the wonder and awe, of the alternate hopes and fears, which must have possessed their hearts. You cannot find one single word which has the appearance of having been put in for the sake of bringing themselves forward. They are not brought forward. The reader of the Gospels does not feel that he is in the presence of Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John. He is in the presence of Jesus. He is a spectator of his wonderful works. He hears the words of one who spake as never man spake. And in this presence, the disciples felt every low, selfish, and personal motive subdued. When they came to write, they never once thought of themselves. "Filled with the grand truth of their subject, their own little feelings are all forgotten, or rather are totally subdued. The natural passions of human nature, which mingle with the thoughts of the wisest and best men, seem with them to have sunk down and become hushed in a hallowed calm."

In this life of Christ we discover no manifestations of any *party* feelings. These writers cherished a strong affection for their Master, but they never magnify him, never praise him; not one word of panegyric is there from beginning to end. There is not the least attempt to hold him up to our admiration; never once do they give expression to their feelings, when they saw him insulted, abused, smitten, and scourged. They give the bare facts in the case, and nothing more. So, on the other hand, they betray no desire to excite the passions of the reader against those who persecuted their Master. The Evangelists cherished no bitterness of feeling towards them. The very names of those who bargained with Judas, of the men who apprehended Jesus, of

the officer who struck him, of those who afterwards did spit upon him, and buffet him, and mock him, and were loudest in crying “Away with him,”—of those, too, who upbraided him on the cross, and pierced his side with a spear,—the very *names* of those persons are not given. Even if these persons had been unknown to the disciples, angry and vindictive feelings would naturally have prompted them to seek out the names of those who made themselves so prominent in these cruel and disgraceful acts. It does not appear that the Evangelists did any thing of the kind. Here is a beautiful trait in their character. The reader is directed to a dissertation prefixed to Campbell’s Four Gospels, where he will see it strikingly unfolded. This writer shows, that, of all the enemies of our Lord, the names only of the high-priest and his coadjutor, of the Roman procurator, of the tetrarch of Galilee, and of the treacherous disciple, are mentioned. In regard to the first four, the omission of their names could have made no difference, for the official title was equivalent in the case of such public men to a designation of the individual; while the part which Judas acted was too notorious to permit the suppression of his name, which, besides, would have cast a shade of suspicion over the memories of the eleven. But the names of those who befriended Jesus are carefully recorded, such as Simon the Cyrenian, who carried the cross, Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus, Jairus, Bartimeus, Zaccheus, Lazarus, Mary, and Martha. How strong the proof it furnishes, that these writers cherished no vindictive feelings,—that they did not write in the spirit of blind partisans!

The wonderful harmony in the portraiture of the character of Christ is the last circumstance which can here be named, as giving an air of truth and reality to these Gospel narratives. It is the same Christ in all; it is the same Christ

in humble scenes and in great ones, at the marriage feast in Cana, and on the mount of transfiguration, by the well of the woman of Samaria, and at the grave of Lazarus, washing the feet of his disciples, and giving up his life on the cross. What a rare union of virtues seldom joined together, bending with grace to the lowliest act, and rising in majesty to the height of the sublimest! That four writers leagued together to propagate a lie should sustain throughout so peculiar and elevated a character as Christ's, should harmonize with each other in the delineation, and, not finding a type of truthfulness and purity in their own breasts, should draw a portrait so lofty, so spotless, so practical, so perfect, surely this was a prodigy which they could not achieve. "The fiction of such a character would be a greater miracle than its reality," and that the Evangelists had a living model before their eyes and hearts is the alternative of the most easy belief.

These are some of the elements of our conviction, that this history of the life of Christ is an honest book. The Gospels bear the impress of truth upon themselves. They are their own witnesses. They confirm themselves. The seal of honesty and reality is stamped upon them. The purest and the most elevated minds see it and welcome it; the very reading of this book lifts the mind up to its highest and noblest state, and the more we are enlightened and purified, the deeper is our conviction that here are words of infinite moment and worth. Nor are they men of learning and research alone who can share this conviction. Thousands of unlettered and simple-minded believers can have the same confidence and peace.

"A man of subtle reasoning asked
A peasant if he knew

Where was the *internal evidence*,
That proved his Bible true.

"The terms of disputative art
Had never reached his ear;
He laid his hand upon his heart,
And only answered, *Here.*"

CHAPTER XV.

THE TRANSMISSION OF THE GOSPELS DOWN TO OUR TIMES.

How were the Gospels at first received and noticed? Into what hands from those of their authors did they pass? With what care were they treated? How were they kept? How extensively were they multiplied? Where were they deposited in that long night of darkness that has intervened between our times and the days of their authors? Where were they found, and how were they regarded, at the dawn of that light which awoke the nations from the slumber of ages? What circumstances attended their translation and compilation in the form in which we now receive them? These are questions of common importance to all Christians, and questions to which all ought to be able to reply.

Christianity was made known by the preaching of Jesus Christ and his Apostles. It was not at first introduced by a written document, like the ten commandments, which were graven on tables of stone. It was *preached*, in various countries, by men who had learned it from the mouth of its Founder. Hence their first duty was different from what it might have been had they lived in a country where printing

and reading were as common as they are with us. Instead of writing the history of the life and words of Christ, we have seen that the Evangelists went everywhere preaching that history. When communities of believers were multiplied, and the Apostles had more demands than they could attend to personally, there arose the necessity of written documents, to go where they could not go, to answer inquiries, and to enlighten and confirm believers. The importance of securing these was still further apparent, by the approach of the time when all the first preachers of the Gospel would be removed by death. As soon as this event had taken place, and John, the last survivor of the disciples, had died, at the beginning of the second century, the writings of the Evangelists were held in the highest regard. These writings were appealed to as writings, as the received and authentic histories of Christ ; they were cited by name ; the names of their authors were given, and frequent quotations were made. These facts are important, as they show that our Gospels were in the hands of the immediate successors of the Apostles, while many were yet living who were contemporary with at least one of the original witnesses of our Saviour, and companions of his life.

The Christian writers who lived in the age next succeeding the Apostles are called the Apostolical Fathers. Quotations from their writings, amply confirming what we have here stated, may be found in all works on the evidences of the genuineness of the Gospels. A few may be here presented.

Papias was pastor of Hierapolis, A. D. 116. He was acquainted, as he says, with many of the disciples of the Apostles. In a treatise, entitled Explications of the Oracles of the Lord, he has these words : — “ Matthew wrote the divine oracles in the Hebrew tongue, and every one inter-

preted them as he was able." Again he writes, — "Mark, being the interpreter of Peter, carefully wrote down all that he retained in memory of the actions or discourses of Christ."

Justin Martyr was a native of Samaria. In the year 150 he addressed a Defence of Christianity to the Emperor, Antoninus Pius ; and in the year 162 made another defence, which was addressed to Marcus Antoninus. In these works he speaks of the memoirs which are called Gospels, and distinguishes between those written by the Apostles and those by the companions of the Apostles, that is, between Matthew and John, and Mark and Luke. He tells us how these sacred books were read in the assemblies of Christians on the Lord's day, and how reverently they were regarded.

Another of these early Christian writers, whose works have come down to us, is Irenæus. He was born, as is generally supposed, at Smyrna, about the year 150, received his Christian education from Polycarp, a disciple of St. John, was pastor of the church in Lyons, and, finally, suffered martyrdom, A. D. 202. Writing in the defence of the Christian faith, he says, — "We have not received the knowledge of the way of our salvation by any others than those through whom the Gospel has come down to us; which Gospel they first preached, and afterwards by the will of God transmitted to us in writing, that it might be the foundation and pillar of our faith. For after our Lord had risen from the dead, and the Apostles were clothed with the power of the Holy Spirit descending upon them from on high, were filled with all gifts and possessed perfect knowledge, they went forth to the ends of the earth, spreading the glad tidings of those blessings which God has conferred upon us, and announcing peace from heaven to men; having all, and every one alike, the Gospel of God. Mat-

thew, then, among the Hebrews published a Gospel in their own language ; while Peter and Paul were preaching the Gospel at Rome and founding a church there. And after their departure, Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, himself delivered to us in writing what Peter had preached ; and Luke, the companion of Paul, recorded the Gospel preached by him. Afterwards, John, the disciple of the Lord, who leaned upon his breast, likewise published a Gospel, while he dwelt at Ephesus in Asia. And all these have taught us that there is one God, the maker of heaven and earth, announced by the law and the prophets, and one Christ, the Son of God. And he who does not assent to them despises, indeed, those who knew the mind of the Lord, but he despises, also, Christ himself, the Lord, and he despises likewise the Father, and is self-condemned, resisting and opposing his own salvation ; and this all heretics do."

Only a fragment of this father's writings have come down to us ; yet so numerous are his quotations from the Gospels, that, when placed by themselves, they fill eleven closely printed folio columns.

Tertullian, the most ancient and most eloquent of the Latin fathers, was born in Carthage, where he was presbyter of the church, and where he became distinguished as a Christian writer about the close of the second century. No evidence from any writer, says Mr. Norton, can be more full and satisfactory than that which he affords of the general reception of the Gospels, and of their authority as the foundation of the Christian faith. There is not a chapter in the Gospels of Matthew, Luke, and John, from which he does not quote ; and from most of them his quotations are numerous. Tertullian says, — " We lay it down, in the first place, that the Evangelic record had for its authors Apos-

ties, to whom this office of promulgating the Gospel was assigned by our Lord himself. And if some of them were companions of Apostles, yet they did not stand alone, but were connected with and guided by Apostles. Among the Apostles, John and Matthew form the faith within us. Among the companions of the Apostles, Luke and Mark renovate it."

In Alexandria in Egypt, there was a celebrated school for the instruction of Christians, of which, near the close of the second century, Clement was the principal master. By him was preserved the same account of the formation and reception of the Gospels. "The Gospels containing the genealogies were written first. The following providence gave occasion to that of Mark. While Peter was publicly preaching the word at Rome, and through the power of the spirit making known the Gospel, his hearers, who were numerous, exhorted Mark, on the ground of his having accompanied him for a long time, and having his discourses in memory, to write down what he had spoken; and Mark, composing his Gospel, delivered it to those who made the request. Peter, knowing this, was earnest neither to forbid nor encourage it. In the last place, John, observing that the things obvious to the senses had been clearly set forth in these Gospels, being urged by his friends, and divinely moved by the spirit, composed a spiritual Gospel."

Origen was born in Alexandria, A. D. 185, travelled extensively in Palestine, Asia Minor, and Greece, became the most learned man of his age, and finally died about the year 253. He cites each of the four Gospels by name, speaks of them as "books in the most common use," "received without controversy," "believed in all the churches of God."

To these few examples, running back to the apostolic

age, and drawn from different countries, should be added the following important reflections by Mr. Norton. "In estimating the weight of this evidence, we must keep in mind, what has not always been sufficiently attended to, that it is not the testimony of certain individual writers alone. These writers speak for a whole community, every member of which had the strongest reasons for ascertaining the correctness of his faith respecting the authenticity, and, consequently, the genuineness, of the Gospels. We quote the Christian fathers, not chiefly to prove their individual belief, but in evidence of the belief of the community to which they belonged. It is not, therefore, the simple testimony of Irenæus, and Tertullian, and Clement, and Origen, which we bring forward; it is the testimony of thousands and tens of thousands of believers, many of whom were as well informed as they were on this particular subject, and as capable of making a right judgment. All these believers were equally ready with the writers who have been quoted, to affirm the authority and genuineness of the Gospels. The most distinguished Christians of the age, men held in high esteem by their contemporaries and successors, assert that the Gospels were received as genuine throughout the community of which they were members, and for which they were writing. That the assertion was made by such men, under such circumstances, is sufficient evidence of its truth. But the proof of the general reception of the Gospels does not rest upon their assertions only, though these cannot be doubted. It is necessarily implied in their statements and reasonings respecting their religion. It is impossible that they should have so abundantly quoted the Gospels, as conclusive authority for their own faith and that of their fellow-Christians, if these books had not been regarded by Christians as conclusive authority. We cannot infer more confidently from

the sermons of Tillotson and Clarke the estimation in which the Gospels were held in their day, than we may infer from the writers before mentioned, that they were held in similar estimation during the period when they lived.” *

Nor is it in the writings of Christians alone that we find testimonies to the reception of the Gospel histories, in the age that succeeded the Apostles. It was about the year 176 that Celsus wrote against Christianity. In his work, which has come down to us, he quotes the Gospels so frequently, as the admitted authority of Christians, that it has been said an abridgment of the history of Jesus might be made from his writings.

Thus there can be no doubt that our present Gospels were in common use at the close of the second century. “The number of manuscripts then in existence bore some proportion to the number of Christians, and this to the whole population of the Roman Empire.” Gibbon estimated the population of the Empire, in the time of the Antonines, A. D. 180, at one hundred and twenty millions, and supposed that about “one twentieth part of the subjects had enlisted themselves under the banner of the cross.” From these data, it has been estimated that there were at least three millions of Christians at the close of the second century. “There can be little doubt that copies of the Gospels were owned by a large portion of Christians who had the means of procuring them; and in supposing only one copy of these books for every fifty Christians, the estimate is probably much within the truth. This proportion, however, will give us sixty thousand copies of the Gospels” in existence at that time. See Norton, Vol. I. p. 52.

* Evidences of the Genuineness of the Gospels, Vol. I. pp. 150–152 (2d ed.).

As we come down to a succeeding age, we find that the progress of the Christian religion, and especially the fierce and wide-spread controversies that marked the third and fourth centuries, called for a rapid multiplication of copies of the Gospels. Translations of them were made into all languages that were then spoken, so that the life and words of Christ might be read, not only in Judea, but in Greece, in Rome, in Asia Minor, in Africa, in Egypt, in Arabia, in Gaul. Thus were produced Syriac, Grecian, Latin, Armenian, Ethiopic, Egyptian, Arabic, and Gothic translations. Nor was this the only effect of these controversies. They caused these Gospels to be most diligently studied; copies were compared with copies; the very words of the Evangelists were quoted as the ultimate authority to which all disputants must yield; and so numerous and various are these quotations in the mass of the controversial writings which have come down to us from those times, that it is said, if every existing copy of the Gospels were now destroyed, the whole Evangelical narrative could be reproduced from the quotations found in the works of five writers alone. It is pleasant to see how the strifes of these ages, though in such terrible contrast with the mild spirit of the Prince of Peace, were yet made subservient, by Him who brings good out of evil, to an unspeakably important end. The fact should reconcile us to the divisions and controversies which still prevail in the Christian world. Who can doubt that these, too, are overruled for good?

That seemed an evil day for the Christian world when there sprung up so extensively a passion for building vast and massive convents and monasteries. In these, the piety and virtue of the times, instead of being like leaven in the corrupt mass of society, seemed to be immured and buried; and the active duties of a Christian life, which the world so

much needed, were neglected for the visions and dreams of monkish cells. The unnatural and secluded life which men there led must have been unfriendly to the healthy piety even of the truly devout ; while with others it favored the vices and crimes of which we have all read in history. Yet how great is our indebtedness to these establishments ! They became the only safe depositories of the precious treasures of the past. Age after age these religious houses were quiet and undisturbed. Invading armies never attacked them ; and while war demolished the fortresses and palaces of kings, the sword of the conqueror was never lifted against these shelters of peaceful piety dedicated to God. Within their walls alone were letters and science studiously cultivated, and thus they handed down the torch of learning from century to century. Every monastery had its library-room ; not only a place of deposit for manuscripts, but a place where manuscripts were copied. Here, shut out from the strifes and cares of the world, many monks were always employed, year after year, in the quiet and patient work, so well suited to the lives they led and to the tastes they cherished, of multiplying copies of important writings ; and by the vast number who were thus perpetually at work, copies were furnished with an abundance, and cheapness, and beauty, which even the art of printing has hardly rivalled. And then, when barbarous ages had passed away, and our modern civilization was established, and through the prevalence of the arts and blessings of peace a better day began to dawn, it was from these houses of religion that were brought forth all that we have of the records of ancient history, and poetry, and eloquence ; and with them the manuscripts which bring down to us the life and words of Jesus. Vast numbers of them have been gathered from various lands, and in various tongues. Griesbach, a learned Ger-

man scholar, consulted three hundred and fifty-five, in order to prepare his edition of the New Testament ; and Michaelis carefully collated the greater number of four hundred and fifty. This is but a small part of all which are known to exist. Even to this day additional copies are found. A year or two since, forty were discovered in an old monastery in Upper Egypt, of various languages, some in the very dialect which was spoken by Jesus and his Apostles, and as old as the beginning of the fourth century. The owners of these manuscripts could not read the languages in which they were written, and probably these copies had been untouched for centuries, in the stone scriptorium where they were found. Had it not been for such arks of safety, thus provided, and guarded, and reverenced, we see not how these treasures of the past could have been so surely preserved to us. They were the fit instruments to accomplish the very work that was then needed. The perpetuity of the Christian religion seems to be owing in part to that cause which threatened its total corruption and death. What can be a more striking proof of God's making even the follies and superstitions of mankind subserve his own designs ?

In 1360, a translation of the New Testament into English was made by Wickliff, "the morning star of the Reformation." He was born in Yorkshire, England, in 1324, and was rector of Lutterworth, in the diocese of Lincoln, till his death, in 1384. His manuscript was a translation from the Latin, and was circulated until it was suppressed by the Pope. Copies of it are quite numerous in the public libraries of England, and in the collections of private individuals.

The art of printing was invented in the early part of the sixteenth century ; and the New Testament was among the books which first received the benefit of the invention. It was printed in 1514, at Alcala, in Spain, under the care of

Cardinal Ximenes, Archbishop of Toledo. Neither time, labor, nor expense was spared to make the work as perfect as the means would permit. Learned men were employed twelve years in comparing various manuscripts, and the expense of a small edition was fifty thousand ducats. "A singular fate attended the manuscripts from which this edition had been prepared. About fifty years ago, two German professors repaired to Alcala, to ascertain if they could be found. They learned, to their inexpressible disappointment, that, about thirty-five years before, the librarian, to whose care they had been intrusted, ignorant of their true value, sold them to a man engaged in preparing fireworks, and he had used them in making rockets."

In 1516, the second printed copy of the New Testament was published by the learned Erasmus, at Basil, in Switzerland. In 1546, a third printed copy was published at Paris, by Robert Stephens, who formed his edition by collating fifteen different manuscripts. In 1582, the fourth printed copy was published at Geneva, by Theodore Beza, who compared all the former editions with manuscripts which had not been consulted before.

The copy of the New Testament first printed in England was published in 1526, by William Tyndale. In 1535, it was again published in that country by Miles Coverdale. In 1611, the translation made by the authority of King James was published; and this is the version which is in general use to this day. The utmost care was taken by the king to secure an accurate translation. For this purpose he selected fifty-four of the best classical and Biblical scholars, in order, as he said, "that our intended translation may have the help and furtherance of all our principal learned men in this our kingdom." This number was reduced to forty-seven before they entered upon their labors. They were then

divided into six companies, to which equal portions of the Bible were assigned. They held their sessions at Westminster, Cambridge, and Oxford, and were employed three years. Upon the completion of their work, a committee of six, chosen from the joint companies, began to review the whole. They met daily for nine months ; and when at length the translation was published, it had such a character for accuracy, that, by general consent, all other translations have fallen into disuse.

At the present day, Biblical scholars find a few texts, in the received translation, which are of doubtful authority, some passages, also, which are obscurely expressed, and not unfrequently a word or phrase inconsistent with the present use of our language. These evils are slight, however, compared with the immense advantages of having the same translation used wherever the English language is spoken. Among these must be included, not only its effect in perpetuating the original character of the Anglo-Saxon tongue, but its moral effect, also, in preserving the unity of the Anglo-Saxon race.

Such has been the transmission down to us of the message which was brought from heaven by the mouth of the Son of God, and which was designed for the children of men in all after times. It would seem as if it was intrusted to very unsafe keeping, judging merely after the manner of men. It had no permanent memorials of brass or marble ; it was in words only, and in words merely spoken, — cast forth upon the air. But those words were gathered up by faithful men, and though committed to frail materials of parchment, they have been handed down to us through ages which have crumbled marble to dust, and rusted all inscriptions from brass. Through what a long and revolutionary period of history have these words found their sure way ! —

the controversies of the first centuries, the irruption of the barbarians, the dismemberment of the Roman Empire, the night of the Dark Ages, the revival of letters, the wars of the Reformation, the discovery and peopling of a new world. Indeed, the whole face of the earth has been changed,—all manners, customs, institutions, arts, and empire! Have the records of the Gospels been changed, or do we read the same words now which were read by the first Christian believers?

CHAPTER XVI.

THE EVIDENCE THAT THE GOSPELS HAVE BEEN TRANSMITTED WITHOUT CORRUPTION.

How do we know that, through all these countless changes, the Gospels have come down to us unchanged? May they not have been corrupted, by additions or perversions, so that we cannot now know whether they are worthy of implicit trust? The early rapid spread of Christianity is one security on this point. Before the Apostles died, churches had been established, not only in the principal places of Judea, but along the whole coast of Asia Minor, in Italy, and Greece; and before the generation that succeeded the Apostles had passed away, there were communities of believers in every part of the then known world. When these faithful preachers had gone to their reward, we have seen that their writings were at once the subject of a wide-spread interest. By every Christian they were regarded as of unspeakable importance. They were sought for and read, not only for the light and comfort of believers in

their private devotions, but as a part of the regular service of the religious assembly on the Sabbath. We have before noticed the estimate which has been made, that, within a century after the Apostles, there probably existed fifty thousand copies of the Gospels, in different tongues, and in different parts of the world.

Now had Christianity possessed only a local interest, and been acknowledged only by a single neighbourhood of believers, who had but a few manuscripts of the Gospels, it would have been less difficult to corrupt these manuscripts, and deceive the community of Christians. But as it was, while we cannot suppose that the writings of the Apostles would be universally corrupted in the very age in which their authors themselves lived, so it seems utterly incredible that it *could* have been done in the age that succeeded. In our day, how impossible that a single false reading could creep, or be forced, into all Bibles, used in all families and churches, not in this nation only, but in all lands, and in all tongues ! Human hands could just as easily introduce a new star into the firmament of heaven, or expunge one of those shining lights from the sky. Doubtless this impossibility is greater now than it was in the earlier days of Christianity ; for such is the accumulative nature of this evidence, the uncorrupted preservation of the Scriptures has been rendered more safe by every step the world has taken from the time of their origin. More copies have been made, and they have circulated over wider portions of the globe. But the same kind of security against a corruption of our sacred writings has always existed, and it existed in the very age that succeeded the Apostles. In the thousand copies that were then made, translated into various languages, and sent into all parts of the then known world, we have a convincing proof that no accident or design could universally impair

their purity and authority. It is true, that, by this multiplication of copies, the chances were increased for verbal errors to be committed. By the comparison of various manuscripts, many errors of this kind are found. A word is sometimes omitted, or misspelled, or transposed, a letter or part of a verse is left out. These various readings, as they are called, are counted by thousands. But not one in a thousand affects the sense, and not one in the whole number constitutes a turning-point of any doctrine or duty. Of so little consequence are the various readings occasioned by a multiplication of copies, while, in consequence of this multiplication, no *essential* errors could be introduced by design, or could creep in through mistake.

But who are the persons to be suspected of undertaking the work of corrupting the Gospels? "Human beings do not act without motive. If we suspect that our sacred writings were at an early period tampered with, either unauthorized additions made to them, or portions erased from them, we can probably give some reason for such an opinion. Who, then, are the persons that would undertake this work? Not Christians, certainly. They must have felt the strongest interest in preserving the purity of these writings. The religion they had embraced separated them from all other men, called them to a new life, gave them new sentiments, and hopes, and desires, demanded of them such a conscientious discharge of duty as had hardly before been conceived of, subjected them to privations and insults, to danger and death. That they should have been indifferent to the purity of those writings on which their faith rested, on which they had staked all their interests and all their hopes, is certainly most incredible." Not only would they not cause, but, as far as their watchfulness could go, they would not permit, the slightest change to be made in books whose sacredness and trustworthiness would be thereby impaired.

Shall we, then, say that corrupt changes of the sacred writings were made in the early ages by the enemies of the Gospel? But why should they set themselves to alter and corrupt what it was so much easier for them to destroy? Why resort to a process so tedious and difficult, and of extremely doubtful success, as that of attempting to weaken the authority and pervert the design of all existing copies of the Gospels by corrupting the text, while the far more obvious and practicable scheme for accomplishing their purpose was before them,—that of destroying the writings themselves? That this alone would appear the practicable course is not mere conjecture and opinion. It is proved to us by evidence and fact. In the persecutions to which the early Christians were exposed, we know that the destruction of their books was often attempted, and, so far as it could be done, it was carried into effect. They were time and time again burned, and all were forbidden to copy them under penalty of death. But we have no evidence and no hint, that the plan of destroying their value and use by corrupting the text was ever attempted, or even once thought of.

But it may be said, that in past ages all who have called themselves friends of the Scriptures have not agreed, any more than such persons agree now, in the interpretation of the Gospels; that we read that there were those in very early times who “wrested the Scripture” to favor their own views; and that, in the zeal of party strife, the sacred writings may have often been corrupted to support the opinions of particular sects.

We will not forget, however, that the very idea of a sect is a number of Christians cut off, or divided from, the body of believers; that the Scriptures have been in the hands of this body, as well as in the hands of the sect; and that if ever it has been for the interest of the minority to alter the

reading of the Gospels, it has been equally for the interest of the majority to prevent such changes, and to preserve the purity and integrity of the text. The division of Christians into sects, then, so far from having endangered, has, in fact, secured the uncorrupted preservation of the Gospels. Some division has existed ever since some were of Paul and others were of Apollos. The Epistles furnish proof how many subjects of controversy agitated the first communities of believers. No one, who has read the history of the Church, will forget how early great and grave questions arose, which continued to divide the opinions of Christians down even to the establishment of the Romish Church. During the general sway of this church, there always existed independent communities that came not under its dominion, while many of the orders embraced in its folds were as much opposed to each other as have since been the Protestant sects. Thus, there has never been a time when an attempt to alter the text of the Gospels, even if otherwise practicable, would not have raised an outcry in some quarter or other. There has never been a time when Providence has trusted the legacy of the Scriptures even to their friends, without some safeguard for their protection and unadulterated transmission. One portion of believers has been a check upon another. In their mutual strifes, they have but one interest in common, — to exercise a jealous vigilance to keep the Scriptures in the same state in which they came into their hands. Any attempt, therefore, to alter them, for the purpose of favoring any particular scheme of doctrines, must have been, in the very nature of things, discovered and exposed.

We have before alluded to the great number of quotations from the Scriptures made by the early Christian writers. The first two hundred years after the death of the Apostles were most prolific of works of controversy, sermons, com-

mentaries, annotations, and histories,— a whole body of literature, furnished by writers of different countries and of different tongues. Their writings have come down to us in manuscripts which are as authentic as any remains whatever of ancient letters. In these we find the words of the Gospels quoted just as we read them now in our Bibles, and so numerous are these quotations, that, as was before remarked, if the New Testament should at any time be annihilated, we could recover the book from the writings of that age. Here, then, is a most important and valuable test of the purity in which the Gospels have been preserved. Had those early authors cited many texts from the New Testament which we do not now find in our copies, we should know that parts of this book, in the course of its transmission to us, have been lost or suppressed. On the other hand, had they quoted other passages in different words, and as conveying different meanings from what we now find in our copies, we should know that such texts have been corrupted, either through accident or fraud. But as the quotations they make agree substantially with the text that we possess, and include almost every passage that we possess, how satisfactory the proof that the Gospels have suffered no essential changes, as they have passed from one generation to another, and are now what they were at first! This evidence is open to no uncertainty, and admits of no refutation. If we will not say that all remains of sacred and profane literature, of the first centuries of the Christian era, were the forgeries of some subsequent age, we must admit that these quotations bridge over the whole period of the Middle Ages, and carry us up to the generations immediately succeeding the Apostles, and show them reading the same Gospels which are now in our hands.

It is a still further important consideration, that the Gos-

pels bear no marks of an age later than that in which it is affirmed that they were written. If they had suffered mutilations and additions from the hands of successive copyists, these alterations, it is likely, would be detected. Especially if they were numerous, if they were thrust in by ignorant transcribers, having different views and feelings, and more or less interested and excited about the opinions and controversies of their own times, how surely would these alterations have been discovered by something not consistent with the character of the sacred writer, by an expression of opinions and feelings which it is not probable that he entertained, by the use of language and the introduction of modes of conception not known at the period to which they are assigned, by an implied reference to opinions and events of a later age, or by some bearing and purpose not consistent with the time when they are alleged to have been written! These are but a few of the ways by which the work of those who had tampered with our sacred writings would surely have been detected. But no traces like these of corrupt changes of the text can be discerned. Says Mr. Norton, in the valuable treatise before referred to, and to which this chapter is so largely indebted,—“No one has yet appeared who has found any thing here which does not correspond to the age in which their authors lived, and to the circumstances in which we must believe them to have been placed.”

So, also, had our Gospel histories suffered mutilations from many successive hands, their unity both of design and style would have been lost. Each writer has a way that is peculiar to himself; his style, mode of narration, choice of expressions, and form of presenting a subject, are all peculiar to himself. So strikingly is this the case, that it has been said, if a chapter from one book should be transferred to another book, having a different author, the transposition

would, by the dissimilitude of the style, be at once detected by a critic. How irreconcilable with all this is the notion that these books have been brought to their present state by additions and alterations of successive copyists ! Instead of the one distinctive character which each work has, a diversity of hands would have produced a diversity of style ; and the patchwork of unknown and successive transcribers would have been a perfect contrast to the simple, uniform, unbroken narrative of the sacred penman.

The same general conclusion is fortified by one more consideration. It is impossible that the records of our faith should have been much corrupted, for whenever and wherever they have been read, men have gathered from them substantially the same Christian religion. Is there a single copy of the Scriptures, in any language, in any land, from which the honest inquirer would draw a different system of faith and practice, or a different representation of the Divine government, from that which he finds in the copy before him ? Is there a copy from which a single article of our faith is absent ? He who would weaken our confidence in the sacred writings, by suspicions of their corruption, should bring forward these conflicting and imperfect versions if he can find them. But this cannot be done. Wherever in the past ages we find men believing in the Christian religion, we find that they believed in the same religion that we believe in ; they held to the same rule of life, referred to the same prophecies, related the same miracles, ascribed the same character to Christ, and were rejoicing in the same immortal hopes. How idle, then, to speak of corruptions which the text of Scripture may have suffered, when we see that it has thus spoken one and the same language to all ! It is true, the mere letter has passed through many hands of copyists and printers, and has been rendered into many different tongues. But ever has it quickened the same spirit ;

the piety that it kindled a thousand years ago is the same piety that it kindles now, and thus has the essential Gospel been, like Jesus himself, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

How can we think of these things without reflecting with gratitude upon the course which Divine Providence adopted, to hand down the Gospel truth from one generation to another? Those frail records of the Evangelists were in fact the most secure means for the preservation of the life and words of Christ which could be employed. "A temple, a statue, a monument, is but one, and however durable may be the material, it continually decays, and is always destructible. The touch of the sculptor moulders from the chiselled surface, and the time will come when every monument of his genius shall have crumbled to the earth. The Pyramids themselves have grown old with age, have forgotten the names of their builders, and have long since betrayed their trust."

But written records are less liable to extinction than any other memorial of the past that can be devised. The sacred words, inscribed of old on parchment, soon found their way to every land, and the time has never been when they could perish or suffer corruption, except by a devastation that visited at once the whole face of the earth.

Thus has the past ever been safe. Thus, too, is the future ever secure. Amid all the revolutions and vicissitudes of earth, the Gospel will still be accomplishing the thing wherefor it was sent, and no one can turn it aside from its silent and steadfast way. The assaults of its enemies are in vain. The gates of death shall not prevail against it. The mouldering fingers of time, that efface every thing else, shall not destroy this. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of the Lord abideth for ever.

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T H E F A L L.

THOSE passages in the second and third chapters of Genesis which describe the conditions on which our first parents were placed in the garden of Eden, their disobedience, and consequent expulsion from this primeval paradise, have had an important influence upon the theology of Christendom. They have been appealed to and relied upon as the chief support of the doctrine of the utter depravity of human nature,— its creation under the wrath and curse of God.

These passages have always received the attention of theological scholars. Much labor and study have been expended in efforts to understand and elucidate them. These efforts have hitherto proved, in a great degree, fruitless. It is hardly too much to say, that there cannot be found in the creed of any church, in the theology of any denomination, in the comments of any critic, an explanation that is satisfactory,— an interpretation which makes intelligible the meaning of the express declarations of the context, and is at the same time reconcilable with those express declarations, and with the general impressions which the context conveys and seems intended to convey.

Thus much, however, would seem to be clear, that the

history of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden gives no support to the view which the popular theology takes of human nature. On the contrary, some of the express and most important declarations in that history, if there be any meaning in the words, convey ideas totally opposite to those which the history is generally supposed to teach. There are intrinsic difficulties in the passage. We may not be able to set forth what it does teach; we may hope to show what it does not teach. This we shall endeavour now to do, so far as the nature of man and the conditions under which he comes into the world are concerned.

All that is essential to our subject begins at the fifteenth verse of the second chapter. In that and the two following verses it is written,—“And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden, to dress it and to keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” Everything in the passage that bears upon the moral character and condition of Adam previous to his act of disobedience is contained in these verses. Do they teach that he was at this time holy and perfect,—at least, more so than his posterity? From these words the popular theology gathers the idea that Adam was now a perfect and holy man, all his desires in harmony with the will and law of God; that he was not exposed to death; that he was exempt from the pain and sickness that lead to death, and also exempt from the necessity of labor. But if we look at the express declarations of the sixteenth verse, we find that all it teaches of the condition of Adam is that he was ignorant of good and evil. This is necessarily and directly implied in the prohibition which forbade him to eat “of the tree

of the knowledge of good and evil." What is the condition of a being "ignorant of good and evil"? Here a serious difficulty besets us. We cannot conceive of such a being. In the lowest grade of animal life, we cannot conceive of a being to whom some things do not give pleasure and others pain, and to whom, therefore, some things are good and some things are evil, and he feels and knows them to be so. In the lowest grade of intellectual, moral, spiritual life, we cannot conceive of a being to whom some things do not appear *right*, and therefore good, and other things *wrong*, and therefore evil. What is good? What is evil? Can we frame any more satisfactory answer than this? To every being *good* is that by which his faculties are agreeably affected, and to every being *evil* is that by which his faculties are disagreeably affected. To a moral being that would be good by which his moral faculties would be agreeably affected, and that would be evil by which his moral faculties would be disagreeably affected. That is, right and wrong would be good and evil to a moral being; and therefore a moral being ignorant of good and evil is a moral being ignorant of right and wrong,—a condition, of which, as has been said, we cannot conceive. This, however, is clear: a being thus ignorant of right and wrong, because ignorant of good and evil, without power to distinguish between them, cannot be a particularly holy and perfect being, could not have the law of God written in great distinctness upon his heart, with power to fulfil it, because this would imply a knowledge of that which was *right* or *morally good*, and of that which was *wrong* or *morally evil*. It would imply that the faculty which takes cognizance of *right* and *wrong* was capable of being agreeably affected by everything *right*, and would hold everything to be good that was *right*, and was capable of being disagreeably affected by everything

wrong, and would hold everything to be evil that was wrong.

Yet, to such a being, ignorant of good and evil, and consequently ignorant of right and wrong, incapable of comprehending a law, or of sinning against a law which he did not comprehend, God issued a command, and enforced it by a threat of punishment. Now punishment is evil ; but to a being ignorant of good and evil a threat of punishment can be of no avail. It cannot become an inducement to him to obey a command. The punishment in this case was loss of life : — “ In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” Privation of life is an evil. We esteem it one of great magnitude. But a threat of suffering such a privation to a being who was ignorant of good and evil, and consequently could not perceive the evil of being deprived of life, must go for nothing. It would be of no avail, because not comprehended.

These remarks present some of the difficulties in the way of ascertaining the precise moral condition of Adam when placed in the garden of Eden. If we take the three verses now under consideration just as they stand, and according to the only intelligible ideas we can attach to the words “ ignorant of good and evil,” they teach that Adam was made, not *more*, but *less*, perfect than we are, — that he had not that knowledge of good and evil, and power to discern between them, which we have ; and further, that God required of him an obedience which, because he was ignorant of good and evil, he could not render, and enforced that obedience by a threat of punishment, which, for the same reason, ignorance of good and evil, he was incapable of comprehending. We cannot believe these propositions, or rest in these conclusions. We cannot regard Adam as created with a moral nature inferior to that of man at the

present day, nor can we admit that God required of him an impracticable obedience, or addressed to him an unintelligible threat. We cannot rest in these conclusions, and yet we cannot so explain the meaning of the words and interpret the passage as not to lead to them.

But as we proceed, another and greater difficulty arises. In the third chapter, we find that Eve, beguiled by the serpent, and seeing that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also to her husband with her, and he did eat. The command of God was violated. The popular theology holds, that, in consequence of this act of disobedience on the part of our first parents, the nature of man was changed; that it became, to use the language of the Westminster Confession of Faith, "*wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body.*" What is there in the context to suggest or sustain this idea? Can anything be found? What was the first act of Adam and Eve after partaking of the forbidden fruit? They sewed together fig-leaves, and made themselves coverings, because they perceived they were naked. So far as this act indicates any moral change in them, it is an evidence of increased modesty, and not of greater corruption and defilement. In what follows, there is nothing that asserts or implies that man's nature became "*wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body.*" God cursed the serpent, but he did not curse the man or the woman. He simply told the woman that she should conceive and bring forth children in sorrow, and be subject to her husband. He told the man that the ground was cursed for his sake, that he should till it in labor and eat of its fruit in sorrow, and return to it in death; but he says nothing of his nature being accursed or corrupted.

He put enmity between the woman and the serpent, and their seed ; but he did not put enmity between the woman and her seed and himself. Nothing is said of an utter alienation of the human heart from God, then and there beginning, and to continue in the posterity of Adam and Eve.

But is there nothing in the whole passage that indicates a change in man's nature,—an intellectual and moral change, as well as a change in his condition and relations? Yes; there is express language upon this point; but it indicates a change widely different from that which the popular theology supposes. In the twenty-second verse of the third chapter, we read,—“And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil.” Here is the express declaration of God as to the consequence of eating of the forbidden tree, and the character of the change it produced. This declaration does not encourage or suggest the idea, that the moral nature of man was changed for the worse, become totally corrupted, defiled, by this act of our first parents. It says expressly, that it became “like God” in one of his attributes. The change would seem to have been from a lower to a higher degree of intelligence, from an ignorance of good and evil to a knowledge of both. Adam became like unto God, to know good and evil. His nature was enlarged, his knowledge and discernment increased. It is directly implied, also, that, had he gone a step farther in his disobedience, and eaten of the fruit of the tree of life, he would have attained immortality in his present state.

The direct language of the passage, then, instead of teaching the corruption and defilement of our nature through Adam's transgression, declares that it became more like God,—that it attained to a moral discernment which it did not possess before. Here, then, arises another inexplicable

difficulty. How can an act of disobedience to God raise a being in the scale of intellectual and moral life? And yet, if Adam became like God, to know good and evil, by partaking of the forbidden fruit, how can we escape the conclusion that his disobedience did produce this result?

We do not now undertake to determine what this account of Adam, whether regarded as an allegory, a dramatic description, or a literal history, really means,—the positive moral truth it is intended to convey. The foregoing observations have been presented, not with the view of giving a satisfactory explanation of this obscure passage in holy writ, but to show that, whatever it means, its most important, express, and positive declarations afford no support to the doctrines which the popular theology of Christendom has for so many ages deduced from it, and rested chiefly upon it. It does not teach that Adam was perfectly righteous, indisposed to sin, less prone to evil than his posterity. Adam had but *one restriction* placed upon his freedom, but *one command* imposed, which he was especially warned not to disobey. He did disobey that one command, and thereby it is proved that his nature was *not* on a higher stand-point than human nature at the present day. He was forbidden to eat of the tree which communicated the knowledge of good and evil. This directly and necessarily implies that he was previously not endowed with this knowledge. Ignorance of good and evil, in a moral being, is ignorance of right and wrong. So far as the passage teaches anything distinctly of the moral condition of Adam at creation, it teaches that his nature was inferior to human nature at the present day,—that it had not the same discernment of right and wrong that we have.

Again, it does not teach, or in any way imply, that Adam's nature, or that of his posterity, became corrupted

and defiled by his transgression. The only positive declaration in the passage that bears upon this point directly asserts that Adam became "like God," through eating the fruit of the forbidden tree ; and to become like God, or more like God, cannot be to become more corrupted and defiled.

But while the positive and express declarations of the passage lead to these conclusions, the general impression made upon the mind by the whole account is, that in some way Adam lost position and favor with God by his disobedience. In that loss we, his posterity, share ; we share in some of the consequences, but not in the guilt, of his disobedience. Descended from him as our great progenitor, we necessarily inherit his kind and mode of being,—a kind and mode of being into which the passage in Genesis represents him as having brought himself by disobedience. We share in the consequences of that disobedience, but not in its guilt ; just as a child born of a parent who has wasted his property, beggared his family, and ruined his constitution by intemperance and licentiousness, shares in the poverty and suffering and sickness that are the consequences, but does not share in the guilt of the licentious drunkard who caused them.

This important, perfectly obvious, and just distinction the theology of Christendom has overlooked. It has attached not only the consequences, but the guilt, of Adam's disobedience to his posterity, and upheld and enforced this idea under the name of *original sin*. But there cannot be any such guilt or sin in man as this term "original sin" is used to express. We may not be able to understand or explain the passage in Genesis, we may not be able to reconcile its express declarations — which teach that Adam enlarged his nature, became more like God, had a higher discernment of good and evil, through his act of disobedience — with the general

impression conveyed, which is that his condition was worse than before. But we can see that the passage teaches no such doctrine as this of original sin, inherited guilt or taint. Not a word can be found in the second and third chapters of Genesis in support of it. We cannot find in all the Bible, in the words of Christ, in all that nature, reason, philosophy, or revelation teaches on the subject of religion and the moral government of God,—we cannot find anything that encourages the idea that any human being is guilty before God for the sin of another, in a transaction with which he had no connection. Through the mutual ties, the physical, intellectual, and moral connection of the race with each other, he may suffer by that sin, but he is not guilty before God on account of it. Man cannot inherit sin, or the guilt of sin, though he may inherit some of the sufferings and injuries that flow from it. Sin is defined in Scripture to be the transgression of the law. It is a voluntary, personal act. We may, indeed, become partakers in other men's sins, by leading them into temptation, by encouraging, persuading them to wrong-doing by our example and influence. But, in that case, we are guilty before God for our own sin in so doing, but not guilty of their sin in yielding to the temptations we placed in their way. They are responsible for that. Sin is a voluntary act. There must be a moral consciousness, consciousness of a law, an authority that has a right to control me, before there can be sin. There is no sin or guilt in my nature before that consciousness is developed. An infant sleeping in its mother's arms is not at that moment a sinner before God, because, and solely because, of Adam's transgression. It is not depraved. Depravity is the result of sin, not its cause. Man becomes depraved by sinning ; he does not sin at first because he is depraved, but because, as a moral agent and

a religious being, he is weak and frail. To all who have received the slightest moral instruction in childhood, the first act of sin gives pain,— brings a remonstrance and rebuke from conscience. Repeated, it gives less pain. Conscience is more quiet and feeble in its opposition. Formed into a habit, it gives little or no pain. The conscience is seared, the heart is depraved. Sin caused the depravity, depravity did not cause the sin. Was man totally depraved at the beginning, his first act of sin would be sweet and pleasant, whereas all human experience goes to show that it brings immediate pain and disquiet. It is only as it becomes habitual, and sears the conscience and stupefies the heart, that man is at ease in sin.

The truth is, that neither of the two great and opposite theories of human nature prevalent in the Christian Church is correct. The tendency of religious opinions to run into extremes is in nothing more manifested than in the views that are entertained of human nature. With some, this nature is incapable of virtue; with others, it is almost incapable of sin, certainly very little disposed to it in its original faculties, desires, passions. But this nature cannot be utterly corrupt, totally depraved, else its development would be all evil, and evil only,—a proposition denied by all human experience. Neither can it be entirely pure in itself, in its desires and tendencies, else its development would be all goodness, purity, excellence,—a proposition equally denied by all human experience. We ought to respect our nature, for it is God's workmanship. We ought to reverence it, for it has noble capacities. We ought to tremble for it, and watch and guard it, for it has evil tendencies, corrupt propensities and desires, that may degrade and enslave it. *Our danger is on the side of too much reverence and respect,—too little thought of those deep fountains of sin that lie hid in the*

human heart,— too little watch and ward over those terrible propensities to evil, that secretly and silently grow strong in the soul, estrange it from God, and make it worldly, selfish, sensual, and depraved.

The idea that all, or nearly all, moral evil, sin, wrong-doing, comes from without, from the influence of bad example, wrong education, unfavorable circumstances,—that there are but slight tendencies to evil in the heart itself,—is not sustained by the actual facts of human experience and observation. Upon this theory, where did the first sin come from? What made Eve pluck the apple? Why did Cain murder his brother? There was a first murder, a first sin, committed when there was no evil example to corrupt, no unfavorable circumstances to seduce; and at the present day, when the outward circumstances are highly favorable, and the outward temptation as slight and single as can well be, sin is often committed, God disobeyed, the law of duty trampled upon, not because of a tremendous pressure upon the soul from without, but because of evil and corrupt propensities within.

“ Man is a being capable of virtue, but liable to sin,” is the form of the proposition in which some express their views of human nature. It may be doubted whether this proposition fully meets the case, and accurately describes the moral and spiritual condition of human nature. Were there only a liability to sin in the human heart, a mere exposure to do wrong if one chose, conscience, reason, thought, reflection, would, in most cases, be a sufficient safeguard against the exposure. Men would not sin so deliberately, so wilfully, so terribly, as they sometimes do. Wick-edness would not so abound in the world. This word “ liable ” does not seem to express the strength of this evil in the soul. A simple liability to sin does not account satisfac-

torily for the actual moral condition of a large portion of mankind. Is there not a *proneness* to sin in the human heart, as strong, to say the least, as its *proneness* to virtue? For instance, is not the proneness to envy as strong as the disposition to admire, rejoice in, and reverence the superior attainments of another, especially if those attainments relate to things that are objects of our ambition and pursuit? Does it not require as strong or a stronger effort of the will to subdue the envy, as to cherish the admiration, joy, reverence? So of other passions or emotions leading to sensual or spiritual sin: is not the propensity to indulge them as strong as the disposition to cherish and invigorate the opposite emotions or desires? and does it not require as strong or a stronger effort of the will to subdue the one, as to cultivate the other? Painful as it may be to admit the fact or use the word, is there any other that will satisfactorily explain the phenomena of human nature, as exhibited in life and character around us? Must we not say of human nature, that it is capable of virtue, but *prone* to evil,—prone to abuse and pervert faculties, indulge passions and desires, which, as original parts of his nature, are good, pure, necessary, but which, thus perverted and abused, produce sin and misery?

We have the authority of Scripture for the declaration, that “God hath made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions.” There is an emphasis in these words, “sought out.” The inventions, the sins, of man are not the mere liabilities of his nature,—things that come and occur against his will, desire, intention. They are things that he has “sought out”; they come with the consent of his will, in obedience to his desire, in conformity with his intention, through the power of passions that, at the time, he delights to indulge, or finds pleasure in indulging. Man knows he is doing wrong when he does it. He means to do wrong when

he does it. At the moment of doing wrong he loves the sin which he commits better than he does the virtue which he violates. Man is capable of virtue, he is disposed to goodness, he cannot but venerate moral excellence, but he is prone to evil. Either in his will, or his affections, or his passions, or in all three,— and none but God, who made man, can tell absolutely which, or which most,— there is something which disposes him to sin, which makes it easier for him to sin than to be holy. While capable of virtue, and compelled to reverence it, he is prone to evil. Is there any other definition that will satisfactorily account for the phenomena exhibited in the moral and spiritual world, explain the wickedness of the profligate, the moral insensibility, the religious indifference and negligence, of the mass?

“God hath made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions.” There is an emphasis in this word “*upright*.” There is no sin in man’s nature; no power or faculty essentially evil in itself, or intended to make him sin. Sin is the abuse of some power or passion, which, in its proper place, and discharging its proper functions, is useful or necessary, and of which man could not be deprived without essential injury. The tongue was made to speak, and to speak the truth, and there cannot be found in human nature any original faculty whose express purpose is to prompt the tongue to utter falsehood and the heart to frame deceit; and whenever falsehood is uttered by child or man, the prompting thereto comes from two desires,— the desire of some anticipated good, which there seems to be no other way of obtaining, or the fear of some anticipated evil, which there seems to be no other method of avoiding. Both these desires are innocent, useful, necessary in themselves. So of every other sin. Analyze it, trace it back to its source. You find that source, not in some faculty or power evil in itself,

and intended to be evil and produce evil, but in the abuse and perversion of some power or faculty innocent and useful in its sphere. Here is man's guilt, not in his nature, but in the abuse and perversion of his nature, or parts of his nature. He is prone to this abuse. It is easier to pervert than to develop his nature according to the moral laws of God. Why thus prone? it may be asked. Why is the harmony of the human soul thus exposed to derangement? Why did not God so create us, that our faculties and desires would act each in its proper place with unerring exactness? We cannot fathom all the designs of the infinite mind, but some light is thrown upon these questions. "There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety-and-nine just persons which need no repentance." We are created for progress in virtue. Where there is no conflict, there can be no virtue. The purest innocence that ever dawned in beauty upon earth, or that ever warmed the imagination that soared toward heaven, awakens indeed tenderness and love; but it calls forth none of that reverent admiration with which we look upon the strong man become holy through prayer and self-effort,—the man who has struggled with deep and powerful passions and brought them into subjection, who has battled with lion-like temptations and triumphed over them. Conflict, warfare, struggle, these are the sources of the soul's true strength, glory, and progress. Take these away, and you leave it in its infantile innocence; but you do not give it the noble endowments of Christian courage, energy, faith, virtue. This, then, is the purpose of God. He has made us weak, that we might attain to strength through faith and prayer. He has made us prone to sin, that we might achieve the glory of victory over it. He has made us free to do wrong, and exposed us to strong temptations to do wrong, that we might reach the

honor and dignity of doing right from choice, and bring our stubborn wills into obedience to the law of the spirit of life.

Human nature, then, has a good and evil aspect, according to the point from which we view it. Each aspect is distinct and true in itself, but neither embracing the whole truth. That is to be found in both conjointly. Man is neither an angel nor a devil, neither totally depraved nor spontaneously good. He is not wholly inclined to evil, and most certainly not wholly inclined to good. The elements of both good and evil, capacities for, propensities to, both, are in his heart. They lie there, the germs of the future saint or sinner, according as he rightly develops, or abuses, or perverts these moral elements of his being. He will do both,— develop some, abuse and pervert other, parts of his nature. As human nature is never such a depraved wreck as to lose all traces of its origin and parentage, all thought of goodness, all capacity to be made better, all hope, however timid and faint, of pardon and peace, so it is never so angelic as not to have sin and be guilty before God. Perfect goodness has never been realized but once on earth. Sin and suffering must more or less track the steps of the most favored of God's children. The sigh for peace, the supplication for pardon, the prodigal's confession, the publican's prayer, must often be ours on the pilgrimage of life. Blessed be God that prayer is not breathed in vain ! The mercy of God is sure, in Christ Jesus, who hath brought hope and deliverance to man. Frail nature may be overborne by temptation and passion, but God is mighty and merciful, and in Christ hath opened a way, through repentance and faith, to godliness and everlasting life.

1st Series.

No. 263.

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THE

TWENTY-FOURTH REPORT

OF THE

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION,
=

WITH THE

PROCEEDINGS OF THE ANNUAL MEETING,

MAY 29, 1849.

BOSTON:

WM. CROSBY AND H. P. NICHOLS.

111 WASHINGTON STREET.

JUNE, 1849.

Price 5 Cents.

C A M B R I D G E :
M E T C A L F A N D C O M P A N Y ,
P R I N T E R S T O T H E U N I V E R S I T Y .

TWENTY-FOURTH ANNIVERSARY.

THE Twenty-Fourth Anniversary of the American Unitarian Association was celebrated May 29th, 1849.

The meeting for business was held in the chapel of the Church of the Saviour, at 9, A. M. Rev. Dr. Gannett presided. Prayer was offered by Rev. Samuel Osgood. The record of the last annual meeting was read. The Report of the Executive Committee was then received, according to the vote of last year, and afterwards adopted. The Treasurer's Report was also read, accepted, and referred to Messrs. J. H. Rogers and George Merrill to be audited. A committee of three was then appointed to receive the credentials of delegates, and the names of sixty were recorded, and read at the adjourned meeting.

A committee of five having been appointed to nominate officers for the ensuing year, they reported the present list without any change, and the following gentlemen were re-elected for the year ending with May, 1850.

P R E S I D E N T .

REV. EZRA S. GANNETT, D. D.

V I C E - P R E S I D E N T S .

REV. SAMUEL K. LOTHROP,
HON. STEPHEN FAIRBANKS.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

REV. JAMES W. THOMPSON,
ISAIAH BANGS, Esq.,
HON. ALBERT FEARING,
REV. ALONZO HILL,
REV. CHARLES BROOKS,
HENRY P. FAIRBANKS, Esq., *Treasurer.*
REV. F. W. HOLLAND, *Secretary.*

} *Directors.*

An amendment to Art. III. of the By-Laws, offered at the last annual meeting, substituting for "a Secretary" a "General and a Home Secretary," was then discussed, and, by vote of the Association, laid on the table.

A sub-committee of the Executive Board offered a printed plan for a modification and extension of the action of the Association, which was read by the Secretary and debated during an interval of business in the morning, and renewed as the principal subject of debate at the adjourned meeting in the same place on Wednesday afternoon, and was finally accepted by a unanimous vote.

At the public meeting on Tuesday evening, Rev. John Pierpont offered the devotional service, an abstract of the Report was given by the Secretary, and the President introduced successively to the meeting Rev. G. W. Burnap, upon the general topic of Unitarianism; Rev. J. F. Clarke, upon Theological Education; Hon. T. D. Elliot and Rev. Mordecai De Lange, upon Missions; Rev. G. E. Ellis, upon the Book Department; and Rev. O. B. Frothingham, upon the Spiritual Character of our Religion; after whose addresses, and some explanatory remarks by Rev. E. T. Taylor, the meeting adjourned, at a late hour, with the singing of the usual Doxology.

TREASURER'S REPORT.

Statement of the Receipts and Expenditures of the American Unitarian Association from May 30th, 1848, to May 29th, 1849.

RECEIPTS.

Balance in the Treasury, May 30th, 1848, as per account then rendered,	\$ 595 45
From Auxiliary Associations and Subscriptions, \$ 2,224 42	
" Donations,	166 00
" Life Members,	750 00
" Sales of Tracts,	95 32
" Societies and Individuals, for Missionary Purposes,	1,624 04
" For Churches needing Aid,	58 00
" For Theological Education, including Mead- ville School,	95 00
" For Circulation of Channing's Works, (includ- ing receipts for sales,)	203 03
" Legacies,	1,500 00
" Interest of Permanent Fund,	1,014 50 7,730 31
	\$ 8,325 76

EXPENDITURES.

For Paper, and Printing and Binding Tracts, \$ 1,430 24	
" Channing's Works for Sale and Distribution, 355 00	
" Salary of General Secretary,	1,000 00
" " " Assistant Secretary,	500 00
" Grant to Assistant Secretary, for extra services, 200 00	
" Travelling Expenses of Secretary,	228 50
" Rent of Office,	225 00
" Incidental Expenses,	236 06
Amount carried forward,	\$ 4,174 80
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Amount brought forward,		\$ 4,174 80
For Meadville School, including Mr. Stebbins's		
Salary,	.	685 00
" Divinity School at Cambridge,	.	15 00
" Missionary Services,—		
To Rev. R. H. Bacon,	.	10 00
" " Wm. Farmer,	.	25 00
" " F. B. Knapp,	.	10 00
" " John Walworth,	.	100 00
" " C. A. Farley,	.	75 00
" " Elder Donald Nicholson,	.	50 00
" " Benevolent Fraternity of Churches,	.	50 00
" Aid of Unitarian Society in Tremont, Ill.,		100 00
" " " " Cannelton, Ind.,		50 00
" " " " Wash'ton, D. C.,		200 00
" " " " Albany, N. Y.,		250 00
" " " " Brooklyn, Conn.,		50 00
" " " " Thomaston, Me.,		100 00
" " " " Topsham, Me.,		100 00
" " " " Bath, Me.,		100 00
" " " " Manchest'r, N. H.		100 00
" " " " Windsor, Vt.,		100 00
" " " " Lowell,		100 00
" " " " Sudbury,		50 00
" " " " Mansfield,		50 00
" " " " Melrose,		20 00
" " " " South Boston,		200 00
" " " " Boston,		100 00
" " " " West Newton,		50 00
		<hr/> 6,914 80
Balance on hand,	.	\$ 1,410 96
		<hr/> \$ 8,325 76

Er. Ex.

H. P. FAIRBANKS, *Treasurer.*

Boston, May 29th, 1849.

The following appropriations chargeable to the account of the present year have not yet been called for, viz:—

For Missionary School at Albion, Mich.,	\$ 50 00
“ Aid of Unitarian Society in Galena, Ill.,	8 00
“ “ “ “ Hillsboro, Ill.,	50 00
“ “ “ “ Montague,	50 00
“ “ “ “ Southboro,	50 00

	\$ 208 00

Boston, June 5, 1849. The undersigned hereby certify that they have examined the accounts of the Treasurer, together with the foregoing statements, and that the same are correctly cast and sustained by the proper vouchers.

JOHN H. ROGERS, } *Auditors.*
GEORGE MERRILL, }

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE'S REPORT.

IN their Twenty-Fourth Annual Report, the Executive Committee of the American Unitarian Association would present a brief history of what has been done another twelve-month, together with their plans and purposes, suggestions and hopes, for another year. As many of the five thousand families which receive this Report reside at a distance from the city, it may be necessary to mention in detail matters which have been familiar as household words, both in their enterprise and completion, to brethren in this vicinity.

While the attention of the Assistant Secretary has been constantly given to the daily cares of the office, to numberless and nameless duties connected with the welfare of the churches, the labors of the Secretary, as Travelling Agent and General Missionary, have been interrupted neither by the unusual severity of the past winter, nor the more trying sultriness of summer, nor any of the casualties which sometimes derange every human agency. He has visited 114 parishes, commenced seven societies, given 164 discourses, addressed 25 Sunday Schools, formed and revived 33 auxiliaries, preached before 70 already organized associations, travelled over 7,244 miles, and rendered frequent aid to various enterprises of philanthropy.

Our Association has rendered aid, during the year, to nineteen societies and eight preachers;—to Albany, Bath,

Brooklyn, (Conn.,) South Boston, Cannelton, Central New York, Western New York, Lowell, Manchester, Mansfield, Meadville, Melrose, Montague, West Newton, Sudbury, Tremont, Topsham, Thomaston, Washington, and Windsor. And besides its assistance to these nineteen pastors, who are so far its missionaries as they depend upon a mission fund, it has engaged or contributed its help to the following preachers:— Messrs. Brigham, Cushing, Emmons, Farmer, Farley, May, Nicholson, and Walworth; making, with the pastors named above, twenty-seven gentlemen.

Intelligence has just reached us of the proposed formation of a Western Unitarian Association, and the establishment of a Book and Tract Depository, at Chicago. The purpose contemplated in the new organization is, 1st. A closer union between our churches; 2d. To supply the spiritual wants of the various small groups of Unitarians now scattered over the West, and unable to supply themselves; 3d. To establish communion with other denominations of Christians whose views and position assimilate them to us; to add to the prosperity of our cause generally by the efficiency of united action in the circulation of books, tracts, &c., and the support of missionaries. At the Convention which originated this movement, on the tenth of this month, at Chicago, a desire was expressed for the presence and help of the Secretary of this Association through the Western churches.

The Unitarian Association of New York has recently raised a fund of ten thousand dollars to enlarge and improve its weekly journal, and is most energetically and successfully at work for the promotion of “pure and undefiled religion.”

From some of those who are in reality missionaries, though hardly accustomed to the name, unusually interest-

ing reports have been recently received. Elder Nicholson, who was assisted at the last Autumnal Convention to a portion of the means necessary to build a Christian chapel sixteen hundred miles west of us, in a little more than two months travelled six hundred and sixty-five miles, preached sixty-two times, attended two weddings and five funerals, and circulated seven hundred tracts and four sets of Channing's Works. His station is Joliette, Illinois. One of his churches is already dedicated and in use, the other waits for more funds from the East. A Ladies' Fair, which was thought to be remarkably successful, raised among his own people about twenty-four dollars; — a token of the scarcity of money among a farming population in a new country, and an assurance that our aid may be indispensable for a season.

Elder Walworth, of Wisconsin, has just consecrated his new church at Monroe. Public services were held in it for the first time on the last Sabbath of April. He officiates regularly to four societies, all of them reported to be increasing in intelligence, numbers, spirituality, and zeal. His church at Rock Grove received ten new members at its last communion. The same number united themselves at about the same time to another of his companies of disciples, six miles west of the principal station at Monroe. He writes of the gratitude of his congregations for our aid, and his prayers for our entire success.

Rev. G. W. Woodward has been frequently disabled by disease, and brought very low, but is now renewed in strength, and full of hope and courage. He discharges the various offices of preacher, teacher, and common school superintendent in that growing community at Galena, and, we rejoice to say, is provided with a respectable house of worship, lately purchased of the Episcopalians.

Rev. John Fisher, recently over the Protestant Irish Society in this city, is now stationed at Cannelton, Indiana, in charge of a society which promises exceedingly well at its commencement.

Rev. S. Larnard, a graduate of the Meadville School, finds constant cause to lament, that, by neglecting to establish our ministry in Tremont, Illinois, at a time when nearly every inhabitant would have welcomed and rallied around a Unitarian pastor, he has now to struggle against multiplied embarrassments and no little opposition in a divided community. One of our Western ministers, now resident on the Mississippi, thus writes us of Peoria, the next neighbour to Tremont:— “ Religion is in a low condition generally; but let the right sort of man go there, and make it his sole laboring place,— let him appeal with freedom to the eternal want of religion in the human soul,— let him mingle freely, familiarly with the people,— let him take an interest in every good work,— and I know no community in which he would be more likely to succeed. In six months or a year, the people would be able to support him. Not half of the inhabitants contribute to any society, and the place has six thousand, and is rapidly growing.” Mr. L. divides his time between Pekin and Tremont.

Rev. Mordecai De Lange, the only Jewish convert numbered among our ministry on this side of the Atlantic, has taken up the mantle of the lamented Moore, of Quincy, Illinois, and finds his labor and sacrifice rewarded by interesting accessions to his communion.

Rev. W. G. Elliot, of St. Louis, has found it necessary to obtain help in the increased labor and multiplying duties of his station, and Mr. Hassall, now completing his studies at Meadville, is expected to become his assistant. His

society have purchased a site for a larger church. The Savannah society, under the pastoral care of Rev. J. Allen Penniman, seems to promise a generous return to his enterprise and self-devotion.

A graduate of Meadville, Mr. Lathrop, has revived the society at Northumberland, Pa., made vacant by the decease of Mr. Kay. His congregation is larger than it has been for many years. It will be remembered that this beautiful spot is the resting-place of the celebrated Joseph Priestley, as well as of his venerated friend, also of England, James Kay. Our worship was commenced here by Dr. Priestley, fifty years ago, in a school-house, with a dozen persons, and has been continued with little interruption up to the present time. Four villages in the immediate vicinity offer excellent opportunities for missionary labor.

Coming nearer home, Mr. William Cushing, also of the last Meadville class, has become pastor of a Christian church in Searsburg, N. Y., and we expect to hear encouraging accounts of his success.

Rev. Edgar Buckingham, of Trenton and Holland Patent, has added two other posts of duty, Briggs's District and Remsen; in one of which his is the only service in English among a considerable rural population.

At our east, the Ellsworth society in Maine has renewed its worship for a part of the year. Two societies have been recently commenced in Thomaston, one of which, under the care of Rev. Mr. Fernald, has been more blessed than any other enterprise of the kind, enjoying a commodious and attractive church, before vacant, with an interested and increasing body of hearers. The young society at Bath is making less progress, because of the impossibility of procuring a tolerable place of worship. Unless this obstacle is overcome,

and a comfortable house provided, this promising shoot of the True Vine can hardly be expected to live, much less to flourish. Both here and at Ellsworth subscription-papers are now in circulation to obtain the requisite funds for building a church, and with hopes of success.

In our own State, the Bedford and Raynham churches, which had been closed for some time, have renewed their services, and Greenfield and Westborough are about to do the same. Winchendon, where our worship was commenced by the Secretary in midsummer, is about to erect a commodious church. Westborough is doing the same. An earnest friend at Bridgeport, Connecticut, has already begun upon a house of worship at her own expense. The newly organized society at Harrison Square, Dorchester, has realized all the expectations of its friends. Its church was purchased of another denomination at the close of the last autumn. It will remain for some time under the charge of Mr. Francis Williams.

Two additional ministries at large — we might say three, numbering the children's missionary in Boston — have recently been established,—Messrs. Burton at Worcester, and Hadley at Portland ; and still another laborer in this interesting field may be expected at Roxbury. From personal knowledge and examination, the Secretary is able to report the eminent usefulness of these institutions at a distance from us, while in our immediate vicinity the friends of the cause have reason to rejoice at the energy, fidelity, and success distinguished.

In connection with distant societies and missionary efforts, the Meadville School deserves especial notice. As a full report of its state will be issued officially in July, it is enough to say now that the institution has passed through

the season of experiment, and won for itself an established place among the spiritual instrumentalities of the times. This is shown by the steady increase of students,— thirteen entering its junior class at the last commencement,— and by the favorable hearing which its graduates have generally received.

The absolute necessity of some such institution quite as far west as this, is acknowledged by all intelligent persons who are familiar with the newer parts of the land. They agree that, generally, the men who are to sustain liberal Christianity at the West must be Western men, the children of its log huts, the pupils of the boundless prairie, the pathless forest, the ocean lake, the majestic river,— men not only at home in the hardship, inspired with the enterprise, aroused by the difficulty, charmed with the variety, hardened against the disease they must meet, but having minds enlarged by the grandeur of God around them, and quickened by the intense social energy of Western life.

Then, again, this school of the prophets is not and cannot be that sectarian undertaking which Western liberality might soon outgrow, and its generous charity reject. Though the *money* has been furnished by us, much of it passing through the coffers of our Association, the school could not have prospered but for the sympathy of another denomination, five times as numerous as our own,— a denomination destitute of any other similar place for the preparation of ministers for fifteen hundred churches. They are therefore our partners in the school, furnishing another just as indispensable requisite as the funds we furnish,— the right kind of men to second our efforts, and make them immediately and widely effectual. And as four denominations have been represented among the Meadville students, it may be hoped that

the wonderful cheapness of living, and the still rarer spirit of catholicity, will attract earnest and generous minds from a wide section, until our country, with its rapid growth and spreading population, shall be provided with a numerous, energetic, and devoted missionary force. Professor Stebbins has felt obliged to resign the charge of the Meadville church, and confine his future labors to the School. As his salary as pastor has made a large part of his support, and another clergyman will require all of this for his comfortable maintenance in the vacant ministry, it becomes necessary this year to redouble our effort, that the high character of the School may be maintained, and its efficiency increased. While the desire to make this a model institution in its economy of means is felt as at first, while it is intended that its entire dependence on our churches shall keep the School in sympathy with them, and them with the School, it is thought that the request for more help in this enlarging field will meet with a prompt and hearty response. Could twenty persons, or even fifteen, be induced to pledge us fifty dollars a year each (for five years), the institution would be enabled to effect all its promises for the church and the world. From the more perfect division of labor which would then be feasible, its working power would be nearly doubled.

Our greatest need at present is *missionaries*. While the regular pulpits are likely to find enough to occupy them respectably, we have hardly any men willing and able to occupy distant and arduous posts of duty in new towns, and among a gathering population. Fifty preachers with the philanthropy of Tuckerman and the energy of Brainard, the practical wisdom of the Whitmans and the spiritual fervor of Henry Ware, could be profitably employed at once,

and they would prepare the way for fifty more. We trust that our theological schools will bear in mind, that, if they only seek to educate ministers for well-established parishes, some of their graduates may fall out of the ranks every year for want of adaptation and other causes. But if a portion of each class keep in view the fact that liberal Christians are bound to take a share in the toil and cost of preaching the Gospel to the scattered and the destitute, the poor and few in new settlements and small villages, that all other denominations are thus provoking us to love and good works, and that the necessities and exposures of our rapidly growing, widely dispersed population are the Macedonian cry, "Come over and help us," an efficient band of missionaries may yet be added to our ranks.

And would every young man who is entering upon his ministry, full of life and hope, endeavour first of all to revive some exhausted church, or begin some one or two societies, besides educating himself rapidly for a most efficient career, he would add so much to the religious life of the times, would extend the borders of our Zion by a healthy growth, and create a steady demand for more and more laborers in the field.

If every young man shrink from this severer toil and costlier sacrifice (a labor and a sacrifice exceeding, sometimes, that of the foreign missionary), it is hard to see how liberal Christianity, as represented by us, can escape from constant contraction of its borders; as here and there want of experience or fitness in a minister, a too lavish expenditure or unexpected calamity on the part of a parish, may close a sanctuary, and consign a pulpit to the stillness of the grave.

Our people are seldom disposed to colonize and form a

new congregation, even when the old hive is full. It needs that an earnest voice should call together enterprising spirits like itself, a young laborer bestow the greater time, hope, courage, fervor, and faith, belonging to youth, upon a comparatively youthful flock, in order that "the word" in us may have "its free course to be glorified." Though the middle-aged can bring more wisdom and experience to the work, the labor and the sacrifice are more easy and more customary at the commencement of the profession than afterwards.

Every year enlarges the opportunity and enhances the necessity of distributing our books. Last February, the "Society for promoting Christian Knowledge, Piety, and Charity" offered one hundred copies of Wilson's "Illustrations of Unitarianism" for distribution among the Theological Schools and Colleges of the United States. The same Society also furnished five sets of Noyes's "Translations," twenty of Burnap's first, and as many of his last work, and a number of devotional books. Copies of Channing's and Ware's Works, and of Whitwell's "Romans," were supplied by other friends, both before and after this donation. The same day on which the "Illustrations" were received, circulars were addressed to two hundred and sixty-three Colleges and Theological Schools, apprising them that an English work of great labor and learning in vindication of our views awaited their orders at the office of the Association, and requesting, if the libraries of their institutions would accept the present, to direct how it should be forwarded. Fifty-nine Colleges and Theological Schools replied favorably, and were supplied according to their directions with books from the value of two dollars to a hundred; and in several cases, cordial letters have been received, acknowledging our kind-

ness, and promising to use it to the best account. The first request came from the Catholic College at Worcester, the last from Wisconsin University. Many others may have been deterred from sending by the miscarriage of the circulars, or the fear of expense attending upon more distant transportation. The Theological Schools supplied were Andover, Cambridge, Concord Biblical Institute, Auburn, Bangor, Newton, New Haven, Connecticut Theological Institute, Geneva Theological Seminary, N. Y., Union Theological Seminary, Lane, Western Baptist, Furman Theological Institute, — thirteen in all, besides the Theological Departments of several of the Colleges and Universities included in the forty-six institutions mentioned before.

Every package contained an assortment of our best tracts, such pamphlets and addresses as could be obtained without expense, a set of Channing's Works wherever the Institution was known to be destitute, and other bound volumes supplied by the generosity of friends in the country as well as city. The bundle sent to the Newton Seminary was of very considerable value. That furnished Andover Institution comprised much of our best theological literature, and was the occasion of adding to that excellent library what was necessary to a full exhibition of our past and present position. Some of the books thus scattered from Maine to Wisconsin, without expense to the Association, may prove, like the stray copy of the Scriptures in Luther's monastery, the awakening of a torpid mind to new life, the inspiration of a larger liberty and a wider Christian charity.

Not a week has passed without a call upon us for our own publications, and for those intrusted to us for distribution. Some days a half dozen packages have been despatched in different directions, besides the regular supply of the Aux-

iliaries. Twenty-six bundles were furnished to California emigrants, amounting in the whole to more than as many thousand pamphlets and volumes. Three societies have been supplied gratuitously with hymn-books for worship,—the ministry at large in Portland, the Society worshipping in Melrose Hall, North Malden, and Mr. Fisher's Congregation at Cannelton. More than thirty Sunday Schools have been presented with appropriate books left at our office for distribution, and many more could have been profitably sent to schools just commencing in new societies at the West; but this department of usefulness belongs properly to another Association. And several individuals, like Hon. Nahum Ward, of Marietta, Ohio, have undertaken the work of supplying their neighbours with our publications at their own expense.

Our tracts have so increased in popular favor that the regular issue of six thousand fails of satisfying the immediate demand, and will require considerable enlargement. We have issued eleven new tracts this year,—one adapted to extend and perpetuate the influence of our Winter Conference meetings, two drawing attention and exciting interest concerning the two leading spirits of the Old Testament Dispensation, one, a volume in itself, of such a character that a neighbouring pastor, at a recent Sunday School Convention, said he wanted words to express his gratitude for so admirable a manual, and intended as the first experiment of a quarterly instead of a monthly publication; and we are reissuing five of our most approved tracts, which had continued in constant demand, although of part of them several large editions had already appeared: Dr. Channing's Baltimore Sermon, Dr. Gannett's Montreal Discourses, Dr. Peabody's "Come and See," and Mr. Waterston's "Watch

and Pray," and Mr. Robbins's "Closet." Four of these are placed for the first time on stereotype plates, in order to be reprinted in future with the least trouble and expense. We have also offered to all our Auxiliaries copies of Brooks's "Christian in the Closet," in proportion to the numbers of their members; and some of these yet wait to be called for.

On the whole,—computing the quarterly tract at three, eight thousand having been issued of Dr. Dewey's Anniversary Address, and a small tract, "The Children who lived by the Jordan," being an addition to our usual number of publications,—we have sent forth eighty thousand new, and five thousand old tracts, or over one million seventy thousand duodecimo pages of the best reading matter. As we have distributed quite as many more, through the generosity of friends intrusting to us spare works from their libraries, or sending through us to some new society or destitute clergyman materials for worship, Sunday School instruction or private study, we may fairly claim to have sent forth, east and west, north and south, three million four hundred thousand pages of a moral and religious nature.

As all the funds which we can spare from other departments of effort are not sufficient to replenish our own Depository, far less to establish similar reservoirs in other central positions, we would desire our friends within a convenient distance of Boston to send to us every year all the tracts, journals, and religious works which they can spare, that we may scatter them over the newer and less provided parts of the land. By constant correspondence and perpetual travel, cases become known in which our old books will be eagerly welcomed as new friends, will give success to the attempted gathering of a Sunday School, shed new life upon a pastor's labors, and show a distant people that

they are still near to our hearts and hopes. Hundreds of thousands of excellent volumes, now in fact buried, might be clothed with a new youth and equipped for a fresh mission at the mere cost of transportation, with no more labor to the Association than that of distribution among applicants so various and so numerous.

But we must not rely upon such inefficient means to overcome the embarrassment of distance from the heart of the Union, and the opposition of powerful sects surrounding us everywhere. Neither will the regular book-trade supply our want. The usual law of demand and supply cannot be trusted here. We must open new channels for the circulation even of writings as popular as Dr. Channing's. Many booksellers are themselves connected with other churches, and conscientiously indisposed to unite with any heart in the sale of our works. Many others are held in awe by a kind of spiritual despotism, and will not give currency to views they really believe, nor promote principles for which they secretly pray. But many who would most gladly welcome our best writers, and over whose quiet lives they would exert the happiest influence, who would meditate patiently on every page, and drink in each stirring word as the earth drinks the long-deferred rain, are distant from the book-marts, unaccustomed to visit the large cities, and little aware what treasures we can place in their hands at the cost of a few days' labor of even the humblest industry. Such persons require the visit of a travelling agent; the book must stand before their eyes and lie in their hands, to quicken their very souls as when the second morning brought to Adam the renewal of his conscious being. It has sometimes been hard for them to believe that twenty-eight thousand pages, full of wisdom, impulse, moral

power, spiritual quickening, light upon duty, the soul, the future, can be purchased in six handsome volumes at a price which one of those volumes formerly cost,— a price which every frugal day-laborer can afford to give.

Thus far, we have hardly begun to make trial of the system which has received the somewhat foreign name of colportage; we have been too ready to yield to the early influences which contracted the range of our publications within a corner of New England. During the past year five persons have been supplied with some of our standard writers for sale,— Rev. Messrs. May in and around Syracuse, Emmons also in Central New York, Forbes in Vermont, Larnard in Illinois, and Snow in Northeast and Eastern New York. Their sales have generally been made without delay, difficulty, or loss; in many cases, the books were eagerly welcomed, and much gratitude was manifested for the unexpected privilege. A large number of public libraries have been supplied *without expense to the Association*, and some prominent clergymen of different denominations have been furnished at their own urgency. Mr. Snow's visits were made chiefly to the remoter places, and among the rural population, or the results would have been greater, and more in correspondence with our expectation. In six months time, he sold through New York, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and Connecticut, chiefly in small places, 436 sets of Channing's works, or 2616 volumes, besides 72 other books of religion; and this was, for him and for us, the first fruits of an ungathered harvest, a promising but necessarily imperfect experiment.

His experience was not without interest. At Woodstock, Vermont, where no preaching distinctly Unitarian has yet been had, twenty-five sets of Channing were readily purchased by

persons through whom they may be expected to work permanently and mightily on society. At a neighbouring rifle-factory, twenty sets were bought by the operatives themselves. In several cases persons came miles to obtain the unwonted privilege of excellent literature at the lowest price. All the Judges of one of our Supreme Courts encouraged the enterprise, and several members of other churches said that, were our views theirs, they would take this very method to extend them, and that they did not see how we could do any less.

As these works have done more for us than any others, through the enterprise of their publisher we can do more with them than with all others. While some of our choicest books are bound fast by costly copyrights, and perverted from a national to a sectional blessing, and their authors consequently are little known out of this immediate vicinity, with the exception of a few friends in each of the principal cities, these works and a more popular series of tracts might be sent wherever the English language is spoken, and at terms so moderate that none who care to own any English book could remain destitute. A new laborer has now entered upon this field, commencing with the State of Maine ; and could his well-known energy and business talent be sustained by generous funds intrusted to us for this purpose, as many copies might be sold the ensuing year as through all the preceding years together. For, except in the neighbourhood of Unitarian churches, we have hardly tried as yet to open the soil for the seed. A separate organization of a very simple kind has been formed, to divide with us a work which might, perhaps, have been left to the hands already pledged to the work, and somewhat experienced in it. In seeking for perfectly trustworthy persons, who would engage heartily in the work, and prove acceptable to our public, might not our theological

students benefit themselves and the cause by devoting their vacations to the circulation of our books? They need health; nothing would be so certain to promote it as a ramble for this purpose among the farm-houses of New England and New York, with variety of scenery and novelty of incident enough to relieve them from the besetting ills of a student's life. They need, more than any other mental qualification, a practical acquaintance with human nature,—that nature which they are consecrating their lives to influence, but which must be understood before it can be moved. The free intercourse with all classes in all circumstances, which is involved in this agency, is the direct road to a knowledge not taught in books or schools, but as necessary as anything they can impart to a successful ministry. Such young men need an acquaintance with the people at large, not merely in a single city or the environs of a college, a familiarity and a sympathy with the hopes which quicken and the principles which guide, the views which interest and the thoughts which agitate, the mass, that their after words from the pulpit may strike the key-note of the popular mind, win their way to the common heart, and seize hold upon the public conscience of the time. For all these personal benefits to the agents themselves, additional to the pecuniary aid it might give in their studies, and the demand it might be expected to increase for a corresponding ministry to follow in the wake of this elevated theology, we would call the attention of theological students to this inviting and unoccupied field.

Our Association has not limited itself, however, to the old methods of action through the past year. Early in the winter it felt called upon to do something for promoting and quickening spiritual religion in this neighbourhood, with the hope that a more earnest piety would prompt increased effort for

brethren less privileged than ourselves ; they desired also "that a closer relation should exist" between our institution and the churches whom it leans upon for support. After discussing the subject before the Boston Association of Ministers, a call was made by a sub-committee of this body for all interested to attend on the last evening of the year at the church in Federal Street. The meetings which followed on subsequent Sunday evenings were alike elevated in character and happy in effect. After the first evening, large audiences were gathered ; earnest speaking, fervent prayer, and heartfelt praise seemed to rise as an harmonious anthem from the whole assembly ; speakers of various denominations participated in the meetings, and Christians of every name rejoiced together over the enlightened zeal, the elevated spirituality, and generous charity which moved nearly every speaker, which heightened the interest of every additional meeting, induced us to continue the meetings for a very long period, and sent exceedingly favorable reports wherever a newspaper finds its way, east or west.

Various good results flowed from these meetings. By the repetition of the addresses in hundreds of secular papers, our denomination and its spirit became extensively and honorably known ; and many an uncharitable judgment was revoked, many a bitter feeling was softened or changed. Apparently, nothing we could have done or said would have gone so far in undceiving the distant parts of the country as to our real character, and preparing them for confidence in our purposes and sympathy with our spirit ; the wave of awakened feeling even reached across the Atlantic, and our English brethren seem moved to seek increased earnestness in matters of religion. Meanwhile, our own churches were refreshed, scattered brethren unable to be present took fresh courage from

the reports which went abroad, many minds received a new impression of the "supremacy of spiritual interests," and other churches as well as our own were aroused to redoubled effort. So that, in regard to general favor or devotional influence, little more could have been desired of so simple an instrumentality. The Executive Committee, under these circumstances, felt themselves called upon to consider the relations of this Association to the interests which had been made so prominent a subject of discussion, and appointed a sub-committee to consider its condition, interests, and prospects, with a view to any change which might be thought desirable in the methods of action. The report of the sub-committee having been accepted, it is, by vote of this committee, made a part of the Annual Report.

"The Committee appointed to consider the condition, interests, and prospects of the American Unitarian Association, find that an examination of the Treasurer's books presents a somewhat different result from their anticipation. An opinion has prevailed that the Association has never been regarded with interest and sympathy in this neighbourhood, that but a small portion of the funds comparatively have been derived from Boston, and that, with its present name, organization, and mode of operation, it never could make a successful appeal to the pockets and purses of our city congregations. The Treasurer's books show that about one half of all the money which has been paid into the Treasury has come from Boston and the immediate neighbourhood. The whole amount, when compared with the numbers and wealth of our denomination, is indeed small: still, if one half has been derived from Boston, it cannot be urged that the Association has failed to receive the sympathies of liberal Christians here. That

our Association does not bring out and concentrate the whole wealth, means, and influence of our denomination must be admitted. It must be admitted also that probably no organization could be devised that would do this. Were we beginning now some new organization, it might be well to have one with a less distinctly denominational name, and somewhat different in its prominent objects and modes of operation. But this is not our position. Here we have this American Unitarian Association : what is best to be done with it ? To dissolve it, even if practicable, would be bad. From one end of the Union to the other, it would be sounded abroad as the death of Unitarian Christianity. Then, probably, it could not be dissolved, if attempted. Such an attempt could only end in division. Those who voted for it, and failed, would feel bound for consistency's sake to withdraw and form some new Association. Those who resisted and voted against it would cling to the organization which they had preserved and determine to carry it on to the best of their ability, though somewhat shorn of strength and deprived of the contributions of those who had withdrawn. Thus there would be two Associations in our denomination, having the same objects, and, from the circumstances of their organization, an opposition to each other which would not disappear for several years. This would undoubtedly be a very bad state of things.

"To attempt to form a new Association, taking no notice of, making no arrangements in regard to, the American Unitarian Association, would also have a bad effect,— perhaps a worse one than the course already mentioned. This would lead to division. Those interested in the new organization would probably lose their interest in the American Unitarian Association, and withdraw from all efforts in its behalf, while others would not have their zeal quickened ; the American

Unitarian Association would languish and be in a worse state than if open opposition had been made to it,— than if it had been openly killed and decently buried,— and both organizations might come to nothing.

“ It would not seem to be well, therefore, either to dissolve the American Unitarian Association, or to ignore it in the formation of a new society. It would seem to be better, in view of all the circumstances, to endeavour to expand the missionary, educational, and religious character and operations of the Association ; to make the books and tracts which it publishes, and all its missionary operations, of such a character as to show that the prominent object is religious, not denominational,— that its purpose is to oppose sin, irreligion, indifference, worldliness, and not to oppose Calvinism, Presbyterianism, or any other ‘ ism.’ It would not be well to give up the name ‘ Unitarian,’ though it may not have been the best selection. It would not be well to forego all protest against the various forms of exclusionism and bigotry ; but this protest will have power, just in proportion as it comes from a thoroughly religious body. To beget this state of things should be the object of the Association. In proportion as it succeeds in this, any protest it may make will have effect. Let the great body of Unitarians become truly and personally religious, let them show that their interest in religion is not simply opposition to Calvinism; but an earnest, positive, practical faith,— the name becomes one of honor, and the body must necessarily possess an important influence. Our general principles and views commend themselves to most persons in this country, and are in harmony with the principles and spirit of our institutions. Let there be shown, connected with these principles, an earnest, living piety, and their power and influence must increase.

"The committee therefore recommend, that this point be distinctly presented in the Annual Report of the Executive Committee,—viz., the importance of enlarging the missionary, educational, and strictly religious department of the Association, showing the Association's capacity for such expansion, and the benefit that would result from it."

At the close of the meetings to which reference has been made, it was deemed advisable to take measures to enlarge the missionary action of our body; especially as the subscription made five years ago for this purpose had expired by its own limitation. A meeting was therefore called at the chapel in Bedford Street, at which, after animated discussion, a committee was appointed to report on the whole subject, whose report, presented at the adjourned meeting, was accepted, with a resolution that it be "recommitted to the Executive Committee of the American Unitarian Association, with a request that they would make its suggestions the prominent topics for discussion at the annual business meeting, and also at the public anniversary of that Association." The Executive Committee believe that they can best comply with this request by including the document so communicated in their present report. It is as follows:—

"Boston, May 6, 1849.

"The Committee appointed to report upon the subject of missionary effort, having held several meetings, and considered the subject under the various aspects which it presents, have come unanimously to certain conclusions, which they beg leave to embody in this report.

"The propriety of extending the influences of our religion by means of special agencies for this purpose, in places

destitute of regular or sufficient Christian instruction, will not be questioned by any one of those to whom this report is made. The design of this meeting having been distinctly announced, it may be presumed that those who have come together are interested in the object for which they have met. They have, doubtless, been influenced by the conviction, that both a duty and a privilege arise out of the circumstances in which they are placed by the Divine Providence. ‘To whom much is given, of them will much be required’; and if our resources and efforts enable us to communicate to others the most precious of treasures, our own enjoyment of which is enhanced by its bestowal on others, then may it properly be accounted our duty to spread the blessings of Christianity to the utmost extent of our ability. The privilege is commensurate with the duty. He who values the gift of God’s love through his dear Son as his own richest possession, must esteem it a joyful coöperation with the Infinite Goodness, to bring others into the inheritance of the same eternal life with himself. And further still, it is clear beyond denial, that the diffusion of Christianity, with all the blessings of civilization, liberty, and social progress which it includes, depends on those who are now disciples of this faith. The argument on which the friends of Christian missions rest their appeal for assistance, in carrying forward the work they undertake, is equally simple and conclusive. Here is a means,—or rather, as it exceeds or embraces all other methods whatever of elevating the human race, here is the one means of personal redemption and security. Here is that which man needs, that he may worthily fill up his existence on earth, and prepare himself for the immortality of a better world. It is ours,—ours to use, and ours to diffuse. The age of

miracles has past. God now employs men in the ordinary relations of life as the messengers of his grace. If we adopt the proper measures for planting Christian institutions on every spot in our land, they will take root and flourish. If we do not, they will be confined to the regions where they are now established. The Gospel is not borne through the air like the seeds which the wind wafts from place to place. It cannot take to itself wings, and fly across the breadth of a continent. It must be carried to those who do not enjoy its presence, and be carried by human beings; who must be sent by others, that shall promise them support in their toilsome ministry. How shall the ignorant and the destitute hear the word of salvation except through the preacher? And how shall he preach except he be sent? ‘Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges?’ The missionary labor as clearly belongs to God’s plan of human improvement as the culture of the ground to his plan of human subsistence. If we do not sustain this department of labor, we leave souls to starve for want of spiritual food; we deprive ourselves of the satisfaction that follows upon discharging the part which falls to us in the economy of the world’s growth under the government of its beneficent Creator; we shut out multitudes from the benefits of that sacrifice which was at once the channel and the expression of an infinite love, and do, in effect, ‘crucify afresh’ him whom we call Lord and Saviour, as we disregard the most emphatic and tender of all the lessons which he has given us. Every one from whom we withhold the Cross becomes a witness against us, that we are not worthy to be saved by the mercy it unfolds.

“The circumstances of our country, and our local position as citizens of this country, add unusual force to the argument.

by which every Christian should be induced to make the diffusion of the Gospel a subject of personal interest. An immense region is open to our approach. It invites our action. Half a continent cries to us for immediate assistance, to prevent its being given over to vice, infidelity, and disorder. Thousands and tens of thousands are pouring themselves, like the waves of the resistless tide, over the mountains, the valleys, the plains that stretch between the boundaries of an established civilization and the shores of the Pacific. The character and destiny of the West — the great and mighty West, nurse of men and home of the future strength of the Union — are in our hands. This has been said by the politician and the philanthropist, till it has become a commonplace of rhetorical declamation. But every year, every day sets before us new illustrations of its truth. We who live in New England may make the West what we please. Shall we make it ‘like the garden of the Lord,’ or shall it yield the rank growth of ignorance and sin?

“It may be useful, in view of our present object, to consider very briefly why we have done so little in sustaining missionary labor. Two reasons may be given, besides the engrossing character of the secular pursuits to which our community are devoted, and the want of personal religious interest seen in so many who bear the name of Christians. In the first place, there is an unrighteous and mischievous prejudice against the word *missionary*. To many ears it sounds as the watchword of religious partisanship, or the sign of intellectual poverty and mean dependence. A most unjust appreciation of the missionary office and the missionary work has prevailed to a considerable extent among us; but it is giving way to a more reasonable and Christian judgment. It will wholly disappear when the true nature

of this work and the dignity of the office shall be understood. A still more effectual hindrance to any such movement as we now contemplate grows out of the character of our people,— a character as distinctly marked as any that ever belonged to any people on earth. They are neither avaricious nor narrow-minded, but as far from these vices as possible. They are, however, a calculating people. Their shrewdness leads them to look at the practical results of any measure. They inquire, before they give either money or effort, what will be the fruit of such liberality. The question which arises before a Boston man is not What will it cost? but What will it produce? Now, missionary efforts appear to him of doubtful utility from two causes;— first, because they have been prosecuted chiefly at a distance, whence have come only uncertain or greatly exaggerated accounts; and secondly, because the results of such efforts must be, to a considerable degree, intangible. If a heathen community be civilized, or a village in New England which has suffered Christian institutions to fall into decay witness their revival, something definite and palpable is obtained. But how many souls may be comforted, instructed, saved, more or less benefited, whose reception of the good, for which they may be indebted to the preacher whom a missionary society shall have sent out, will never be recorded in any statistics but those of heaven, or be known to the persons by whom that missionary may have been sent to his field of labor!

“ We need not enlarge on these topics. We turn from them to consider how we may perform the duty, and exercise the privilege, and render the service, and enjoy the satisfaction, which are offered us in the providence of God. How can we spread Christian truth and righteousness through the land?

"Some of us, by going ourselves to the destitute places; few, however, can leave their homes and change their whole course of life, to become preachers of religion. By sending books, tracts, publications of every kind, suited to enlighten, impress, convert, guard, those whose want and exposure demand relief; but the books and tracts must be carried, and their influence must be preceded, accompanied, and followed by the living voice, the living presence. The missionary must be sent from the parts of the country where Christian privileges are a familiar inheritance, and must be decently and adequately supported;—decently, that he may not awaken pity or contempt instead of respect; adequately, that he may not be compelled to neglect his appropriate function while he procures the means of subsistence.

"Missionaries must be sent. Where shall they be found? Here,—among us,—in every State, county, town in New England, in New York, in Pennsylvania. More are ready to offer themselves than we have the means at our command to sustain. They wait only to know that they are wanted, and they will appear, happy and grateful to be employed.

"But they will need preparation. We would not send into the West, we would not send anywhere, men who have received no training. Even the most zealous will need culture. 'The spirits of the prophets' must be made 'subject to the prophets'; they must be taught how to direct their own benevolent inspiration. We would educate young men for the work. We would educate them at Cambridge, at Meadville, or by the assistance of clergymen in their own houses. We have the institutions and the men, under whose fostering care our missionaries might be fitted for a usefulness coex-

tensive with the opportunity which they are eager to embrace. We should be glad at once to put fifty young men under the proper training. Perhaps we could not to-morrow, or this year, find more than half that number, who would come forward to receive our bounty ; but let us begin upon the work systematically, and with a determination, which shall be understood by others as well as ourselves, that we will not act from a brief enthusiasm, but will lay the foundations of a plan, whose efficiency may become more manifest every year ; and the number of those whom we may call our beneficiaries, but who will really be our benefactors, will increase faster than our ability to meet their demands upon our gratitude.

“ With the views which they have now expressed, the committee approach the details of the subject to which their attention has been directed. These arise out of the general inquiry, What methods shall we adopt for the discharge of our duty, in the extension of Christian influences by means of missionaries, whom we may send far and near, with the command graven on their hearts to ‘ preach the gospel ’ to every creature whom they may find a stranger to its blessed influence ?

“ The committee believe they need not occupy a moment in showing that neither individual exertion, nor individual liberality, will be sufficient for this end. We must combine our efforts, join our contributions, consult and act together. But little can be done by personal, disconnected zeal, however sincere in its purpose or generous in its sacrifice. Much may be accomplished by the union of those who will quicken one another and coöperate for the largest and wisest result.

“ Such coöperation will require an organization. It need not be cumbrous nor ostentatious ; but there must be method,

plan, distribution of duties,—in a word, organization. Shall it be a new organization for this specific purpose, or shall we take advantage of what we now have, and make it subservient to our present purpose? The committee have carefully considered this question, and, after viewing it on every side, unite without hesitation in the opinion, that we have now an organization adequate for the purpose, and of which we can avail ourselves with far more effect than would result from an attempt to form a new missionary association. It will probably be understood by every one, that the committee now refer to the American Unitarian Association. They believe that this institution can be made the instrument of all the good now contemplated, and they doubt, or more than doubt, if any other arrangement could take its place, which would not be attended with difficulties that would greatly embarrass its action. The Association is in existence; it is well known; it has an honorable history; it is connected with the names of revered friends; it has permanent funds, which will probably receive augmentation; it enjoys the benefit of an act of incorporation; it has established a central office, and now commands the whole time of a General and an Assistant Secretary. These are circumstances not to be lightly disregarded. There are two considerations which add force to the conclusion which the committee have reached. First, the American Unitarian Association, according to its plan and constitution, admits of just such an enlargement, or change in its methods of action, as we may wish to give it. It is flexible, not restricted to a particular mode of operation or class of objects, amidst the various aims of Christian beneficence, but is intended and fitted to embrace every form of action, and every purpose which circumstances may suggest to a watchful and judicious charity. Such an increase

of its present efficiency would not be attended with any embarrassment, either by throwing upon its officers too heavy a burthen of care, or by requiring them to divide their attention among too many objects, since it would, in fact, add no new enterprise to the ends which they now endeavour to promote, but would only clothe them with greater ability for executing one of their present objects.

"A still more weighty consideration, in the judgment of the committee, is the character which it was intended by the early friends of the Association that it should bear, as appears from its Constitution, and the documents presented to the public at the time of its formation. It was proposed and organized for the promotion of the very purpose which we are now met to carry forward. The language of the first article of the Constitution is decisive on this point. It declares, that "the object of the American Unitarian Association is to diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of pure Christianity, throughout our country." This language was not used in an exclusively sectarian or dogmatic sense. The founders of the Association did not mean, by selecting the name of Unitarian, to intimate that they would confine its instrumentality to an inculcation of theological tenets. They gave it that name, because it was an honest declaration of their own opinions, and also expressed the position in which they were placed by the exclusive policy of other sects, who, while they were ready to accept whatever money Unitarians might contribute to their funds, refused to grant them a proper share in the control of the societies by which it was disbursed. The founders of the American Unitarian Association felt the same obligation, and were moved by the same desire, which now influence those who would increase the contributions of our body to missionary purposes. They could not consent

to the alternative, that Unitarians should either remain inactive, or bestow their money for the propagation of what they accounted error, and therefore devised this means of giving to the liberality of our people its proper direction. They hoped that men would be employed to preach the Gospel, who, while they should avoid the false interpretation put upon Scripture by other denominations, would make it their special business to unfold the great truths of religion, and press them upon the conscience, or imprint them on the heart. The committee speak with entire confidence on this point. They might quote various passages from documents on the files of the Association, to show that its early friends were not actuated by a narrow sectarianism, or the spirit of proselytism, but regarded the diffusion of the Gospel, in its moral and spiritual influences, as the end which should be kept constantly in view. They confine themselves to two extracts ; — one from a paper presented to the Berry Street Conference, on the day before the organization of the Association, in which its purpose was thus described : —

“ ‘ The chief and ultimate object of this Society will be the promotion of pure and undefiled religion, by disseminating the knowledge of it where adequate means of religious instruction are not enjoyed. A secondary good, which will flow from it, is the union of all Unitarian Christians in this country in one general object, so that they would become mutually acquainted, and the concentration of their efforts would increase their efficiency.’

“ A distinction is here plainly drawn between the primary object of the Association, which is described as purely religious, and the sectarian or theological action that may result from its establishment, which is noticed as a ‘ secondary good.’ The other extract is still more emphatic. It is from a paper of instructions, which was given to a gentleman who was employed as an agent to obtain subscriptions to the

Association, soon after its establishment, and which was afterwards printed as a circular for general use.

“ ‘The efforts of the American Unitarian Association will be directed, in accordance with the first article of the Constitution, to the promotion of Unitarian Christianity, not simply, nor chiefly, of those views which distinguish the friends of this Association from other disciples of Jesus Christ, but of those great doctrines and principles in which all Christians coincide, and which constitute the substance of our religion. We wish to diffuse the knowledge and influence of the uncorrupted Gospel of our Lord and Saviour.’

“ These passages leave no doubt of the intention of the founders of the Association. That circumstances have somewhat constrained the action of the Executive Committee, and given it a more directly sectarian character than such a purpose as we have imputed to those who were connected with its early history might seem to justify, is only a reason why we should restore its original design, and make it the channel through which the contributions of all the members of our churches may reach their proper destination. The committee believe that the present officers of the Association would rejoice to see its efficiency increased, and a breadth given to its operations which they may not have yet exhibited. The changes that would be necessary, to render this Association the instrument of the good which it is our desire to effect, are so slight, that they need not be described. They would consist in certain internal arrangements, which it would fall within the province of the Executive Committee, rather than of this meeting, to fix; and this report, therefore, instead of enlarging upon what it is needless, and it might be improper, here to consider, will be closed by specifying three objects, on which the American Unitarian Association should in future bestow particular attention.

“ First, the education of young men for the ministry, or

rather for the missionary work. Such an education, after the preliminary studies, for which it might be proper in some cases to provide to a greater or less extent, could be pursued either at Cambridge, at Meadville, or under the care of some clergyman in his own home. At Cambridge, the expenses, as charged to the student, are inevitably large, but they are greatly reduced by the appropriations from the late Mr. Williams's legacy, and from the funds at the disposal of the Hopkins Trustees. If the whole cost of residence at Cambridge, including clothes, as well as instruction, room-rent, fuel, and incidental expenses, be put at \$250 a year, the divinity student, who shall make his want known, may hope to receive, on an average, \$150, leaving him to procure, by other means, only \$100, or \$300 for the whole course. This deficiency the American Unitarian Association might, wholly or in part, make up, enabling the student who had no resources of his own to enter on his profession free from debt. At Meadville, the cost of an education is very much lower, being put, in the official estimate of expenses, at thirty dollars. We cannot, however, suppose this sum would be sufficient, except in cases where an extreme economy was practised. We would rather place the needed amount at fifty dollars, exclusive of personal clothing. This amount the Association could advance; and when it is considered that probably the larger number of those who would be willing, and be best fitted, to engage in missionary labor, at least in the West, would be attracted rather to the Meadville than to the Cambridge school, it is easily seen that an inconsiderable annual appropriation would enable several young men to complete their preparatory studies, and qualify themselves for the enterprise before them. A few might prefer to remain under the private direction of a minister,

and this would perhaps be more expensive, in the result, than either of the other methods; but here also, the Executive Committee of the Association, after considering the circumstances, might think it proper to afford some aid. The number who should receive assistance, in either or all of these places, cannot be determined beforehand. Each case must be decided on its own merits. We have said that we should be glad to see fifty beneficiaries of such a charity as we propose, now preparing themselves to go out and proclaim the everlasting Gospel to sinful men. It may be years before so large a number will be collected into our theological schools; but the sooner and the more heartily we make the attempt, the shorter will be the interval before we shall witness the fulfilment of our hope.

"The second point to which we hope the Association will give prominence in its future operations is, the distribution of devotional books and works on practical religion. These are silent missionaries. They, too, must be sent. They will be welcomed. Often they go to spots which the living preacher cannot visit. They carry truth to inquiring minds and suffering hearts. They prepare the way for the preacher. They perpetuate his influence after his departure. We speak of devotional and practical writings; for the committee do not wish, and they believe the persons by whom they were appointed do not wish, to give to the contemplated movement a sectarian character. It is not Unitarians, but Christians, that we would make by means of that blessed religion which every sect that owns Christ as founder of the one Church which he 'purchased with his own blood' esteems as the instrument that God uses in the regeneration and sanctification of man. We need more works of a practical and devotional kind than we have; but it is gross injustice

to speak as if we had not many such already. Among the tracts of the American Unitarian Association may be found several, the whole spirit and design of which would recommend them to any Christian body, and make them ministers of good to any one who, conscious or unconscious of his spiritual needs, required counsel or sympathy. Among writings of a larger size, it is enough to enumerate the volumes which bear the names of Channing, Ware, and Peabody, to show that we are furnished with just such materials as we should desire in the prosecution of any plan like that to which we have referred. The American Unitarian Association has already undertaken the circulation of these books, and, should encouragement be given them to enlarge this branch of their operations, we doubt not that the Executive Committee would gladly establish agencies, stationary or itinerant, by which works of this class might be scattered over the whole country.

"The third form in which our present purpose might find expression is the employment of missionaries wherever the destitution or the desire of the people might invite them to enter. The vast region which we call the West, reaching from the Mississippi to the Pacific, is missionary ground. The new States that are there rising into importance, or into existence, have all that is needful for their material and political growth; but that which shall secure, for the millions who will fill their cities and towns, moral worth and religious hope, must be sent to them, and be sent mainly from the Atlantic and the Northern Atlantic States. Other denominations recognize their obligation to provide Christian teachers for those growing settlements. We rejoice in their energy and liberality. Shall we not coöperate with them in effect, though we may be compelled to adopt a

distinct mode of action? Shall we not emulate their zeal, and share with them the satisfaction of saving that unmeasured extent of country, soon to be covered with men of our own race and lineage, from being given over to irreligion and worldliness? The West, however, will not receive exclusive attention. New England contains many spots that require the presence of the missionary. At this moment, probably, a dozen preachers could be employed most beneficially in the State of Maine, not in converting men from one form of belief to another, but in leading them to an active faith in God and Christ, to the discharge of their social and religious duties, to a preparation of their immortal souls for judgment and for heaven. The officers of the American Unitarian Association, through the correspondence which they maintain with all parts of the Union, would be able to seize at once on the most suitable places for receiving the missionaries whom they might send forth, and would make, from its augmented resources, the appropriations that would be necessary for their support.

"The committee will close this report with one other suggestion. It is, that, by some action of this meeting, the subject, which they have endeavoured to present under the aspects which seem to them most important, should be brought under the notice of the Executive Committee of the American Unitarian Association, not only for their consideration, but in the hope that they will give it prominence in the discussions that may take place on the next anniversary. While they would leave to that body the determination of questions which may arise respecting the manner in which money should be raised or expended, they would respectfully suggest, that, at both the private and the public meet-

ings of the anniversary, the propriety of a more efficient missionary action be made a chief subject of attention.

“The views which have now been presented may be condensed into the following propositions, which the committee beg leave to offer to the meeting: —

“1. That it is the duty and the privilege of every Christian, and of every Christian denomination, to diffuse the Gospel of Christ as widely as possible.

“2. That, for this end, missionary effort should be organized and maintained on a liberal plan by us as a Christian body.

“3. That this effort should be particularly directed to the education of young men for the ministry, the employment of preachers in destitute places throughout our country, and the distribution by them, or by other hands, of writings of a devotional and practical character.

“4. That the American Unitarian Association offers to our use, in prosecuting this enterprise, an organization of which we should be glad to avail ourselves, by pouring into its treasury funds which its officers may appropriate in the ways just described.

“5. That a general coöperation of our body in enlarging the resources of the American Unitarian Association, that it may exhibit more efficiency in its missionary operations, is what we desire and recommend.”

We have thus laid before our public not only the doings of the year past, but our hopes and purposes for years to come. Offering fervent thanksgiving to that Providence which has signally blessed us hitherto, and is now marking out for our hands a most inviting field of labor, acknowledging our unworthiness of such a glorious mission, such privi-

leges, truths, motives, consolations, and hopes, let us here pledge ourselves to renewed fidelity, to united, generous, hearty, wise, and therefore successful effort. And, invoking upon our institution that blessing without which Paul may plant and Apollos water in vain, we will repeat to the world the words of an English statesman,—

“ Applaud us when we run, console us when we fall, cheer us when we recover, but for God’s sake let us pass on.”

At the business meeting of the American Unitarian Association, held May 29, 1849, a report which had been prepared by a sub-committee of the Directors, and, by their order, distributed among the members of the Association, was, with an amendment, accepted, and is now published in connection with the Annual Report.

“ The sub-committee who were instructed to prepare a plan for the future operations of the Association, have felt themselves directed towards the result which they shall now present alike by their own conviction and by external pressure. They believe, that, if no intimation had been conveyed to them of a wish that the Association should exhibit more breadth and strength of purpose, the history of the last year is enough to suggest to the Executive Committee the propriety of endeavouring to enlarge its efficiency. Without meaning to express dissatisfaction with the work which has been accomplished, they conceive that an institution, situated as this is, in the midst of opportunities, and with some considerable observation drawn to it by the attempt that was made two years since to give it an organization better suited to its high purpose, ought not to be content with the amount of its past usefulness. To this conviction, founded on a near acquaintance with its proceedings, is now added the call made upon the Executive Committee of the meeting, held in the Bedford Street Chapel, as appears from the Report which has been communicated to this Board, according to a vote of that meeting. The sub-committee,

therefore, at once entered on the details of a plan for bringing the capabilities of the Association into more satisfactory manifestation, and beg leave to offer the following outline: —

“ 1. The Executive Committee shall in future be divided, immediately after the annual meeting of the Association, into three sub-committees,— one to be entitled the Committee on Missions, which shall have charge of all the business that falls properly under the heads of missionary labor and theological education, i. e. the preparation of young men for the ministry, and the employment of preachers in itinerant service, or in feeble societies where they are not expected to form a permanent engagement; one to be entitled the Committee on Publications, which shall have charge of all that belongs to the Book and Tract Department, as the procuring and printing of tracts or essays or volumes, and the circulation of whatever the Association may publish or may include in its system of distribution, by means of auxiliaries, or stationary or travelling agents ; and one to be styled the Committee on General Business, which shall have charge of whatever subjects, besides those which have been assigned to the other sub-committees, shall come before the Executive Committee, and shall especially be intrusted with the duties of the present Committee on Finance. It shall be the office of each of these sub-committees to examine and report upon every matter which shall come before the Executive Committee, and be referred to them respectively. They shall never, except by special vote, be authorized to take final action on any subject; and, on the other hand, except in cases which require an immediate decision, or can be disposed of without debate, no matter shall pass under the final judgment of the Executive Committee until it has been considered and made the subject of a report by the committee to which it belongs,— said report to be made as often as convenient in writing. Each of these sub-committees shall consist of three members, besides the Secretary, who shall, *ex officio*, belong to each of them ; or in case the amendment of the by-laws, proposed on the last anniversary, shall be adopted, the General Secretary shall be a member of the Committees on Missions and on Publications, and the Home Secretary of the Committees on Publications and on General Business.

“ 2. The attention of the Executive Committee the next year shall be largely given to the preparation and employment of missionaries

for the diffusion of Christian truth in the destitute places of New England, and the wide region of the West. They shall bestow more attention than has formerly been given on the circulation of books and tracts, presenting just views of religious belief and the religious life, by means of special agents employed for this purpose throughout the country.

" 3. The Secretary, or General Secretary, if such he should be styled, shall spend most of his time out of Boston, visiting places near and more distant, that he may awaken or strengthen the missionary spirit, may create or diffuse an interest in the Association, and, by public addresses and personal intercourse, may increase its funds and promote its purposes. The regular and incidental business of the office in Boston will therefore fall principally into the hands of the Assistant Secretary.

" 4. The present system of auxiliaries shall be altered in two respects. First, while the subscription, entitling a person to be considered a member of the Association, shall remain \$1 or more, any annual payment, of not less than 25 cents, may entitle a person to become a member of an auxiliary; and every auxiliary shall have the right to send to the annual meeting, in behalf of those whose annual payment falls below \$1, one delegate for every \$10 so raised. Any congregation may adopt its own method of raising money, by subscription, donation, or public collection, and may constitute itself an auxiliary (with the rights just described) by an annual payment, of whatever amount, into the treasury of the Association, the vote of January 4, 1826, on this subject, being hereby repealed. Secondly, the present monthly distribution of tracts shall cease, the votes of the Executive Committee, passed September 28, 1826, and March 18, 1830, being hereby repealed; and instead of such monthly distribution, each member of the Association shall be entitled to receive a copy of every publication issued by the Association, and each auxiliary shall be entitled to receive, for distribution among those whose annual payment falls below \$1, such an amount of publications as the ability of the Association may permit the Executive Committee to vote in each case.

" 5. The publications of the Association shall in future be divided into three classes. 1. Tracts, either doctrinal, practical, or devotional. 2. Books, essays, or treatises, varying in size from 48 pages

to the ordinary dimensions of a 12mo. volume. 3. Children's books, of such a kind as may give them correct views of religious truth, of duty, and of Scripture. The first class shall, as far as possible, consist of original productions, of which at least six shall be printed every year. The second class may include reprints of valuable religious works, of which at least two shall be issued annually. The third class shall be published in a neat but inexpensive style, as often as circumstances may permit.

" As the circulation of books and tracts will be an object more diligently pursued by the Executive Committee than in former years, arrangements shall be made for this purpose. Travelling agents, especially, shall be engaged, who, for a stipulated sum or a fixed percentage, shall visit different towns and states, and carry such volumes as Channing's and Ware's Works, the Memoirs of Channing, Ware, and Peabody, Dewey's, Greenwood's, and A. P. Peabody's Sermons, Burnap's and Livermore's Lectures, Brooks's devotional works, and the larger or smaller publications of the Association. A capital of at least \$1000 shall be constantly employed in this way. The writings which shall be circulated in this manner shall not be exclusively or chiefly controversial or dogmatic in their character; but such as may lay the foundation, and build up the structure, of a Christian life in the reader. The future publications of the Association, also, shall aim rather at the production of spiritual good than at the establishment of a peculiar doctrinal faith. While the Executive Committee will hold themselves precluded from giving currency to erroneous theological tenets, they shall particularly desire to spread abroad the moral and Divine influence of our holy religion.

" 6. The Executive Committee shall encourage and assist young men whom they may think fitted, and find disposed, to devote themselves to the Christian ministry, by such annual appropriations towards defraying their expenses at Cambridge, Meadville, or elsewhere, as they may in each case deem proper. They shall also endeavour to increase the means of professional education at our Theological Schools. Missionaries may be employed permanently or at intervals, either in large towns, like Utica in New York or Burlington in Iowa, where there are many persons now connected with no religious society who would probably welcome Unitarian preaching, or in the villages of Maine, or the settlements of the West, where

the most inadequate provision is made for the religious instruction of the people. The Association ought to have at least twelve such missionaries in constant employment.

"7. To meet the various preferences of individuals, subscription papers shall be printed, with a general title to this effect,— "Annual Subscriptions and Donations to be paid into the Treasury of the American Unitarian Association," and with four columns, one bearing the title of "Preparation and Support of Missionaries," another, "Circulation of Books and Tracts," the third, "General Objects," the fourth, "Donations," which column shall have sufficient breadth to allow the purpose for which the donation is made to be stated. These subscription-papers shall be offered by the Secretary in the places which he visits, and shall be sent to other places, and the money that shall be received in return shall be appropriated according to the terms of the subscription or donation. The Treasurer's books shall be kept in such a manner as to indicate the distinction marked on these papers. All moneys subscribed or given for General Objects shall be expended by the Executive Committee in such ways as they may think best, either for missions, publications, salaries and incidental expenses, or any special object that may claim their attention.

"8. Immediately after the anniversary, the Executive Committee shall endeavour, by putting the various methods now described into operation, to enlarge the pecuniary resources and moral efficiency of the Association, and, by the visits of the Secretary, by correspondence, and by public meetings, shall endeavour to raise at least the sum of \$ 10,000 the next year, in addition to the amount of receipts the present year. The change in the conditions on which auxiliaries may be recognized, the variety of objects for which subscriptions and donations shall be sought, and the greater interest felt in missionary efforts, it may be hoped, will render this practicable.

"9. Larger and more respectable accommodations shall be obtained for the office in Boston. The present apartment the sub-committee regard as very unsuitable, being both small and close, and absolutely forbidding that privacy which ought to be desired and secured at meetings of the Executive Committee. There are obvious reasons why the Committee should wish to retain the connection of the office with the establishment of Messrs. Crosby and Nichols, and they hope it will be found practicable to hold this connection, and yet enjoy

conveniences from which they are now debarred. But if no better arrangement can be made in this building, the sub-committee think the Secretary and Treasurer should be authorized immediately to hire some other room. No one who understands the nature of the business transacted at the office of the Association, or who has observed the number and character of the persons who visit the office, or considers that it has become a central point in the regards of the whole denomination, will complain of the appropriation of \$500 a year,—a larger sum than is now paid, and a sum which would procure the accommodations now needed,—to defray the expenses of rent, fuel, and necessary care of the room.

“ In connection with the office, the sub-committee would recommend that a project, entertained in the earlier years of the Association, be revived, and a library of Unitarian books be collected, which shall be permanently deposited in or near the office of the American Unitarian Association, shall be the property of the Association, and shall be under the charge of the Assistant or Home Secretary. Such a library might easily be commenced by soliciting from authors copies of the works which they have published, or from friends duplicates of volumes on their shelves, and might be constantly enlarged by the addition, through gifts which would be freely bestowed, of future works. In a few years, a complete collection of Unitarian theological and religious writings would be made, and would constitute a valuable part of the property of the Association. The books might be kept for reference in the office, or be lent on conditions observed by the borrower.

“ With the library the committee would also unite a reading-room, in which as many of the religious journals of the day as could be procured, without expense to the Association, should be kept for the use of all persons visiting the office. Such means of increasing the social intercourse and strengthening the cordial regards of professors of the same faith, are worthy of the notice of the Executive Committee.

“ The sub-committee offer these suggestions to their associates in the management of the affairs of the institution, whose influence and action they would extend, in the hope that for whatever may be rejected something better will be substituted by which the object we all have at heart may be gained. And they would finally advise that such parts or such emendations of this Report as shall be adopted by

the Executive Committee, or its substance, be presented to the business meeting of the Association the next week, both that the members of the Association may be informed of the attempt which, if the Executive Committee of the next year shall follow out these suggestions, will be made to infuse new energy into its operations, and that they may have the opportunity of giving their sanction to the methods which are proposed for this end. The advantages of such frankness on the part of the Executive Committee, and concurrence on the part of the Association, are too plain to need description.

"Boston, May 21, 1849."

ACT OF INCORPORATION.

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS.

In the year one thousand eight hundred and forty-seven.

An Act to incorporate the American Unitarian Association.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives, in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows: — Section 1. Charles Briggs, Samuel K. Lothrop, Henry P. Fairbanks, their associates and successors, are hereby made a corporation, by the name of the American Unitarian Association, with all the powers and privileges, and subject to all the duties, liabilities, and restrictions, set forth in the forty-fourth chapter of the Revised Statutes; and said corporation may hold real and personal estate to the value of fifty thousand dollars, to be devoted exclusively to the promotion of the interests of moral and religious instruction. Section 2. All donations, devises, and bequests of real and personal estate, which may heretofore have been made to the American Unitarian Association, or to the Executive Committee thereof, shall be and enure to the use and benefit of the corporation hereby created, to be appropriated, however, to the purposes designated in any such donation, devise, or bequest. Section 3. This Act shall take effect from and after its passage.

House of Representatives, March 3d, 1847. Passed to be enacted.
EBEN. BRADBURY, *Speaker.*

In Senate, March 4, 1847. Passed to be enacted.
W. B. CALHOUN, *President.*

March 4th, 1847. Approved.
GEO. N. BRIGGS.

Secretary's Office, March 5, 1847.

I certify the foregoing to be a true copy of the original Act.
JOHN G. PALFREY,
Secretary of the Commonwealth.

BY-LAWS.

ARTICLE 1. The object of the American Unitarian Association shall be to diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of pure

Christianity throughout our country ; and all Unitarian Christians in the United States shall be invited to unite and coöperate with it for that purpose.

ART. 2. An annual subscription of one dollar shall constitute a person a member so long as such subscription be paid, and a subscription of thirty dollars shall constitute a person a member for life.

ART. 3. The officers shall be a President, two Vice-Presidents, a Secretary, a Treasurer, and five Directors, two of whom, at least, shall be laymen. These officers shall be chosen by ballot, at the annual meeting, and shall hold their offices for one year, or till others be chosen in their stead.

ART. 4. These officers shall constitute an Executive Committee, who shall meet at least once in each month, and shall have charge of all the business and interests of the Association, the direction of its funds and operations, with power to fill any vacancies that may occur in their number between any two annual meetings, and to call special meetings of the corporation whenever they shall deem it necessary or expedient.

ART. 5. It shall be the duty of the Secretary to keep a full record of the meetings of the corporation, and of the Executive Committee; to conduct the correspondence of the Association and keep an accurately arranged file of the same ; and in general to perform such services, to suggest, devise, and execute, under the direction of the Executive Committee, such plans and measures, as shall, in their judgment, tend to promote the objects of the Association, increase its usefulness, and enlarge the sphere of its influence ; and his salary shall be determined by vote of the corporation at the annual meeting.

ART. 6. The annual meeting of the Association shall be held on the Tuesday before the last Wednesday in May, at nine o'clock, A.M., at such place in the city of Boston as the Executive Committee may appoint, of which due notice shall be given by advertisement in two or more newspapers published in Boston, at least ten days previous.

ART. 7. Any amendment of these articles, proposed at one annual meeting, may be adopted at the next, if a majority of the members present vote in favor of it.

CLERGYMEN MEMBERS FOR LIFE.

The following clergymen have been made members for life of the Association, by the donation of thirty dollars or more, principally from ladies of their respective societies.

Abbot, Abiel, D. D.	Clark, Amos
Adams, Edwin G.	Clarke, Samuel
Alden, Seth	Cole, Jonathan
Alger, Horatio	Colman, Henry
Alger, William R.	Coolidge, James I. T.
Allen, Joseph, D. D.	Cordner, John
Allen, Joseph H.	Crafts, Eliphalet P.
Allen, T. Prentiss	Crosby, Jaazaniah
* Andrews, William	Cunningham, Francis
Arnold, Augustus C. L.	Cutler, Curtis
Babbage, Charles	* Damon, David, D. D.
* Bancroft, Aaron, D. D.	Dewey, Orville, D. D.
Barrett, Samuel, D. D.	Doggett, Theophilus P.
Barry, William	* Edes, Edward H.
* Bartlett, John	Edes, Henry, D. D.
* Bascom, Ezekiel L.	Edes, Henry F.
Bates, Reuben	Ellis, George E.
Bellows, Henry W.	Emmons, Henry
Bigelow, Andrew, D. D.	Everett, Oliver C.
* Brazer, John, D. D.	Farley, Frederick A.
Briggs, Charles	Field, Joseph, D. D.
Brigham, Charles H.	* Flint, Jacob
Brooks, Charles	Flint, James, D. D.
Brooks, Charles T.	Fosdick, David
Brown, Addison	Fox, Thomas B.
Buckingham, Edgar	Frost, Barzillai
Burnap, George W.	* Frothingham, William
Burton, Warren	Furness, William H., D. D.
Chandler, Seth	Fuller, Arthur B.
* Channing, William E., D. D.	Gage, Nathaniel

* Dead.

- Gannett, Ezra S., D. D.
Gannett, Thomas B.
Gray, Frederick T.
Greene, William B.
* Greenwood, F. W. P., D. D.
Hall, Edward B., D. D.
Hall, Nathaniel
Hamilton, Luther
Harrington, Joseph
Hedge, Frederic H.
Hill, Alonzo
Hill, Thomas
Holland, Frederic W.
Hosmer, George W.
Howe, Moses
Huntington, Frederic D.
Huntoon, Benjamin
Ingersoll, George G., D. D.
Johnson, Rufus A.
Judd, Sylvester
Kendall, James, D. D.
Lambert, Henry
Lamson, Alvan, D. D.
Lincoln, Calvin
* Little, Robert
Livermore, Abiel A.
Livermore, Leonard J.
Loring, Bailey
Lothrop, Samuel K.
Lunt, William P.
May, Samuel, Jr.
Merrick, John M.
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